

**THE INFLUENCE OF DIVORCE FACTORS ON
DIVORCING COUPLES' RECONCILIATION
BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD ATTENDING
RECONCILIATION SERVICES**

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Abstract: The purpose of this research is to examine the reconciliation beliefs and interest to attend a reconciliation service among couples who have filed for divorce. Two separate studies were conducted. Study 1 examines the association between divorce factors and reconciliation attitudes among 1,085 divorcing parents who have registered for a mandatory divorce education program. Study 2 is a longitudinal examination of 376 divorcing individuals. Participants completed surveys at the time of registration for a mandatory divorce education class, immediately following the class, and at follow-up between 6 – 12 months after the class. Key findings indicate that nearly two out of every three divorcing individuals within this sample reported reconciliation beliefs at some point during data collection. Likewise, approximately 80% of the sample at some point indicated an interest to attend a reconciliation based service.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Approximately 20% of first marriages in the United States will end in divorce within the first five years and 48% will divorce before their 20th anniversary (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, & Mosher, 2012). According to U.S Census data only 68.1% of children will spend their entire childhood in an intact family (2012). Each year about one million children will experience the divorce of their parents (Gaydos, Schwieterman, & Zimmer, 1999).

There is a wealth of research on the impacts of divorce on children and divorcing parents. Children of divorce are at a higher risk for academic challenges, lower levels of wellbeing, increased risk for a mental disorder, increased substance abuse, suicide attempts, and incarceration (Amato, 2000; Hoffmann, 2002; *Osborne & McLanahan, 2007*; Zill, Morrison, & Coiro, 1993). For divorcing parents, divorce can be a traumatic experience in which parents experience an identity crisis (Dreman, 1991) due to losing a romantic relationship with the associated benefits of emotional support, companionship, regular sexual partner, and economic security (Amato, 2014).

While divorce may be the best option for many couples (e.g. domestic violence), there is a growing body of literature that suggests that for many couples' divorce can be prevented. For example, one study found that half of divorces come from low conflict relationships (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). Further research indicates that both men and women typically report that growing apart, lack of attention from their spouse, and communication difficulties as the most common reasons for divorce, rather than highly conflictual relationships (Hawkins, Willoughby, & Doherty, 2012). Moreover, there is evidence that after divorce, couples from low-conflict marriages typically report declines in overall wellbeing, while divorced couples from high-conflict marriages report increased well-being after divorce (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). Additionally, nearly half of divorced individuals report wishing they would have worked harder to resolve their marital differences (Hawkins, et al, 2012). One study examining the rates of reconciliation among divorcing parents going through a mandated co-parenting class reported that about 25% (1 in 3 men and 1 in 5 women) of divorcing individuals indicated beliefs that their marriage could still be saved (Doherty, Willoughby, & Peterson, 2011). Additionally, 1 out of 3 couples had at least one partner reporting reconciliation beliefs with 10% of both partners reporting with hard work their marriage could still be saved (Doherty et al., 2011).

Allen & Hawkins (2017) posit that the term *reconciliation* consists of all “non-divorce” options and may promote a false dichotomy between marriage and divorce. Research that approaches reconciliation with binary assumptions may not accurately capture couples' lived experience of the divorce and reconciliation processes. Allen & Hawkins further argue that couples on the verge of divorce who decide to “reconcile” don't automatically engage in marital repairment. Rather, many couples who do not divorce may stay married out of

convenience, denial, and tolerance (Allen & Hawkins, 2017). Amato (2010) describes this as a state of ambiguity in which couples are not “quite married and not quite divorced” (p.661).

Efforts to theoretically make sense of the ambiguity regarding decisions to reconcile have most often been explained through attachment theory (see Doherty et al., 2011).

Previous research indicates that the quality of adult attachments is associated with relationship satisfaction for married couples (Davilla, Bradbury, & Fincham, 1998). Further, researchers have identified divorce as a disruption in attachment-based relationships (Main, Hesse, & Hesse, 2011). Attachment theory helps identify why divorcing individuals may retain beliefs of reconciliation even after filing for divorce in hopes of reestablishing the relational bonds and connection with their spouse (Doherty et al., 2011). However, Allen and Hawkins argue that previous theoretical approaches to reconciliation may not fully reflect the experience of many families (2017). In a review of relational decision-making theories, Allen and Hawkins identified that social exchange theory (Charvoz, Bodenmann, Bertoni, Lafrate, & Giuliana, 2008), risk and resilience (Few & Rosen, 2005), feminism (Hewitt, Western, & Baxter, 2006), and narrative theories (Kanewischer & Harris, 2015) have also been used to explain decisions to stay or leave relationships. Due to the exploratory nature of the present study, no specific theoretical framework will be used. However, a discussion of theoretical implications of results will be provided.

While the literature has identified that a significant portion of divorcing couples may consider alternatives to divorce and that “there is more potential than often assumed to repair relationships” (Hawkins et al., 2012, p.454) there is limited research building on Doherty and colleagues (2011) seminal work examining how factors associated with divorce influence reconciliation beliefs among divorcing couples.

The purpose of this dissertation is to present findings from two studies to further the research on reconciliation by identifying: (a) to what extent select self-reported factors leading to divorce are associated with divorcing couples' reconciliation beliefs and reconciliation service seeking attitudes (Study 1) and (b) how does reconciliation beliefs and reconciliation service seeking attitudes change across the divorce process? (Study 2)

Literature Review

The modern roots of researcher's and professional's interest in "divorce prevention" began in the 1960s, where many family court professionals viewed themselves as "marriage counselors" who sought to assist troubled marriages in reconciling before pursuing divorce (Folberg, Milne, & Salem, 2004). The assumption of the legal system at the time was that many divorcing couples could reconcile if helped with a team of legal and mental health professionals (Doherty et al., 2011). However, the emphasis for reconciliation was relatively brief. As noted by Doherty and colleagues, the focus of family courts shifted in the 1970's from a "reconciliation first" mentality to helping couples divorce with dignity (Doherty et al., 2011). As a result of the legal systems' shifting emphasis away from reconciliation, the primary resource provided for divorcing couples in the 1980s and 1990s became predominantly mediation based services rather than court referred couples' therapy (Folberg et al., 2004; Tessler & Thompson, 2007).

While there is a relatively limited body of research on reconciliation among divorcing couples, research most frequently indicates that a range of 10-15% of couples considering divorce, actually reconcile (Doherty et al., 2011). For example, one national study of divorcing couples in 1977 reported that 77% of married individuals who separate got divorced, 11% remained separated, and 12% of couples who had separated reconciled

(Bloom et al., 1977). In 1984, researchers found that 23% of divorce filings were withdrawn and never finalized (Kitson & Langlie, 1984). In a nationally representative study of women ages 30-44, found that 16% of participants got back together with their partner after separating (Morgan, 1988). In 1994, the National Survey of Families and Households reported that one-third of separated couples attempt to reconcile and that they are successful approximately 30% of the time (Wineberg, 1994; Wineberg, 1995). Finally, Wineberg indicates that approximately 10% of the total separating sub-sample of the National Survey of Families and Households had reconciled and had successfully been together at least one year after reconciling (Wineberg, 1995). Overall, the research literature on divorcing couples' reconciliation indicates that reconciliation may be possible for a significant portion of couples even after separating or filing for divorce.

Though the decision to divorce is a complex venue and involves numerous contextual and processional elements, only fairly recently have researchers been able to and began to assess for reconciliation beliefs after couples have filed for divorce. Doherty and colleagues' work in 2011 was the first research to explicitly examine divorcing couples' beliefs regarding reconciliation and interest in attending a reconciliation based service after couples had filed for divorce. By collecting dyadic data as part of required parenting class for divorcing parents, Doherty et al., identified that in 45% of divorcing couples, one or both partners reported interest to attend a reconciliation service and in 10.5% of couples, both partners reported reconciliation beliefs. This vein of research has spawned great professional interest in providing couples an avenue for slowing down the slippery slope of divorce and discerning whether divorce is the desired result. However, given the dearth of specific research on reconciliation, much is still unknown about the factors influencing reconciliation

beliefs and the process by which partners lean in or out. The present study builds off of the work of Doherty, Willoughby, & Peterson (2011) by further examining reconciliatory attitudes and associative factors among couples who have filed for divorce and are part of a mandatory divorce education program.

Divorce

Pinsof (2002) observed that during the last half of the twentieth century, for the first time in history, divorce replaced death as the end point of the majority of marriages. Divorce is typically associated with shifts in roles, assumptions, relationships and routines for divorcing couples (Sakrida, 2005). Researchers have been interested in post-divorce outcomes for divorcing couples for numerous years. Overall, individuals who have been divorced experience greater depression, more health concerns, and less life satisfaction than married individuals (Amato, 2010). Furthermore, individuals who have been divorced are at greater risk of psychological distress (Huddleston & Hawkins, 1991; Walters-Chapman, Price, & Serovich, 1995), suicide, homicide, and substance abuse (Amato, 2000; Bloom, Hodges, Kern, & McFaddin, 1985). It has also been noted that almost half of divorcing families experience poverty after divorcing (Heath, 1992), one study found that on average, household income decreases 42% after divorce (Corocan, 1994). Additionally, there appears to be an intergenerational transmission of divorce, where the influence of a divorce has been associated with detrimental relational outcomes across three generations (Amato & Cheadle, 2005). While divorce may be met with a sense of relief for some individuals, they are still likely to experience anger, sadness, guilt, feelings of hopelessness, and ambivalence towards reconciliation (Angelisti, 2006).

Due to the frequent detrimental outcomes for divorced individuals there has been a call

to identify how reasons of divorce are associated with different post-divorce outcomes (Amato & Previti, 2004). The limited research available indicates that individuals who attribute the dissolution of the marriage based on the quality of the relationship tend to demonstrate better post-divorce adjustment than individuals who identify personal characteristics or external factors as the cause of the divorce (Amato & Previti, 2004).

While there is a large body of research identifying the potential negative outcomes of divorce for kids, one study reported that 75% of children do not experience long term effects as a result of their parent's divorce (Heatherington & Kelly, 2002). Additionally, children whose parents divorce from a highly conflictual relationship tend to experience better outcomes after the divorce than during the marriage (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). Furthermore, it is possible that as divorce becomes less stigmatized and as we better understand the issues surrounding divorce, the impact of divorce on children may reduce overtime.

Factors of Divorce

As noted by Asante, Osafo, & Nyameke (2014) there is no one factor for why some couples divorce and the reasons vary from couple to couple. However, a variety of researchers have identified several factors that are associated with divorce. For example, through cluster analysis, Amato and Hohmann-Marriott (2007) found two distinct clusters of divorcing couples. The first cluster consisted of divorcing couples who argued frequently, engaged in physical violence, indicate low commitment to marriage, low levels of trust and love, and reported higher perceived number of problems. The second cluster consisted of divorcing couples who report little physical violence, infrequent arguments, few thoughts of

divorce and moderate levels of marital happiness. Further, in Lowenstein's (2005) review of divorce factors around the world concluded that early marriage and arranged marriages, economic factors, education level, social skills, liberal divorce laws, sexual incompatibility, women's independence; role conflicts; alcoholism and substance abuse, risk-taking behavior, religious factors, and attitudes toward divorce were common factors that influenced a couples' decision to divorce. Other researchers have found support that domestic violence, infidelity, reoccurring conflict, unemployment, if the bride is pregnant, and a history of divorce increases the likelihood for divorce (Hall & Fincham, 2006; Kurdek, 2002; Amato & Previti, 2004, Sasse, 1997). Specific research examining the relationship between substance abuse and divorce indicated that individuals who abuse alcohol experience a 20% increase risk for divorce (Kessler, Walters, & Farthofer, 1998) providing further support for the link between heavy drinking and divorce (Rognmo, Torvik, Ildstad, & Tambs, 2013).

Divorce Initiate

Before the decision to divorce is made there is usually a period of conflict in which both partners contribute to the dissolution of the marriage (Wallar & MacDonald, 2007). Amato and Rogers (1997) found that couples who divorced, frequently had increased conflict within the relationship as early as 9-12 years before divorcing. Despite some of the challenges of identifying who initiated the divorce, it remains an important status to consider when examining reconciliation beliefs and other outcomes among divorcing couples.

The majority of research indicates that divorce initiates demonstrate better post-divorce adjustment than the non-initiating partner (Sweeny & Horwitz, 2001). Regardless of gender, the partner who initiates the divorce process typically report less total problems

adjusting to the divorce then individuals who did not initiate (Buehler, 1987; Pettit & Bloom, 1984; Rossiter, 1991; Sweeney, 2002). Lowey (2008) describes that the divorce initiate frequently has begun to emotionally and psychologically disengage from their partner while still married and physically present with their spouse. The added time and opportunities to prepare for life after the divorce often provides the initiator a greater sense of control and typically adapt to post-divorce changes better than the non-divorce initiating partner (Hewitt & Turrell, 2011). It is important to note that even though divorce initiators' frequently report feelings of guilt for ending the marriage, they still typically experience better post-divorce adjustment (Wilson, & Weignand, 2010).

Conversely, the non-initiating partner often reports feeling like they had no warning about the divorce (Rokach et al., 2004). Additionally, non-initiators frequently report feeling rejected, confused, helpless and powerless over the divorce process (Feeney & Monin, 2008; Hewitt & Turrell, 2011; Sakrinda, 2005; Worden, 2009). Overall, research indicates that the non-initiating partner typically experiences greater emotional and psychological distress than their divorce initiating partner (Baum, 2003). It is important to note that one study found that 18 months after divorce there was no statistically significant difference in post-divorce adjustment between different initiating statuses (Petit & Bloom, 1984). Research examining the link between reconciliation beliefs and initiation status found support that non-initiating partners as being more interested in trying to reconcile than the partner initiating the divorce (Doherty et al., 2011). As such, divorce initiation status is a variable of interest when considering reconciliation beliefs among divorcing couples.

Gender Differences

While divorce is typically distressful for both partners there are gender differences that emerge in post-divorce adjustment. For example, research indicates that men and women differ in how, who, and when they mourn during the divorce process (Baum, 2003). For example, men going through divorce tend to mourn the absence of their children and family more than they mourn the loss of the spousal relationship (Riessman, 1990). Women on the other hand, are more likely to mourn for the loss of the marital relationship (Riessman, 1990). Additionally, women tend to be more expressive and verbalize their emotional pain and experience heightened depression (Bruce & Kim, 1992; Mandell, 1995). In contrast divorcing men tend to cope by increasing work activity and are more likely to self-medicate through alcohol (Reissman, 1990). Researchers have theorized that fathers' unresolved grief surrounding the divorce often leads to later disengagement from their children after divorce (Arendell, 1992).

One of the most prominent gender differences associated with divorce is when males and females experience the most distress (Baum, 2003). Diedrich's (1991) report on divorce adjustment indicated that the majority of literature indicates that women typically experience the most distress during the actual dissolution of the relationship and during the decision to divorce, while men experience more distress after the divorce but typically experience less stress than women during the divorce decision making process. However, it is likely that when men are the divorce initiate they likely experience distress early in the divorce process (Baum, 2003). While it is typical that both parties contribute to the dissolution of the marriage, two out of three divorces are initiated by women (Amato & Previti, 2003). There is also support that middle-aged women experience more frequent and intense anxiety, loneliness, and depression than younger divorcing women (Bogulob, 1995; Wallerstein,

1986). and that divorced women experience significantly poorer immune functioning compared to married individuals (Kiecolt-Glaser, Fisher, Ogrocki, Stout, Speicher, & Glaser, 1987; Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001).

Co-parenting

Children who frequently see both parents after divorce adjust better to the post-divorce changes (Amato, 2014). Additionally, when parents engage in collaborative co-parenting children demonstrate greater resilience after divorce. (Amato, 1993). Co-parenting occurs when there is continual involvement between parents in relation to their children (Hardesty, Khaw, Chung, & Martin, 2008). Policy makers have acknowledged the positive benefits of co-parenting and the majority of states in the U.S. offer a divorcing education curriculum for divorcing parents (Mulroy et al., 2013). Divorce education programs are designed to inform parents how they can minimize the risk of divorce on children (Amato, 2014).

Forty-six out of 50 states in the U.S. require divorcing parents to participate in a co-parenting class before finalizing the divorce (Mulroy, Riffe, Brandon, Lo & Vaidyanath, 2013). Studies on the effectiveness of co-parenting classes have shown that divorce education programs have been useful in increasing parents' understanding of how their divorce is impacting their children and reduces conflict with their co-parent (LaGraff, Stolz, & Brandon, 2015 & Brandon, 2010). Additionally, co-parenting class participants report better parent-child relationships, better child wellbeing, and better parent wellbeing (Salem, Sandler, & Wolchik, 2013).

Reconciliation beliefs are often assessed during divorce education programs (see

Doherty et al., 2011). Additionally, divorce education programs provide a unique opportunity to intervene with couples who have filed for divorce but are not yet legally divorced. Further research is needed to assess to what extent divorce education programs influence reconciliation beliefs and to examine changes in reconciliation beliefs across the divorce process.

Current Study

There are a significant number of couples going through the divorce process where one or both partners believe that the marriage could still be saved. Previous research has identified that initiation status, gender, and the factors leading to divorce may contribute to post-divorce adjustment and outcomes. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine in greater detail divorcing couples' reconciliation beliefs and attitudes towards attending a reconciliation service. Two distinct studies will be conducted to address two different research foci surrounding reconciliation beliefs and services. Study 1 will examine 1,085 couples who have filed for divorce and how selected factors relate to divorcing couples' reconciliation beliefs and services. Study 2 will longitudinally examine 376 individuals reports of reconciliation beliefs and attitudes towards attending a reconciliation service change across three time points: during registration for a divorce education class, immediately after the class, and 6 months after the class.

Manuscript #1

In response to Amato & Previti's (2004) call for more research to examine how specific factors of divorce are associated with different post-divorce outcomes this study will examine how: differences in raising children, substance abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse,

involvement with criminal activity, and sexual abuse are associated with reconciliation beliefs and interest in receiving reconciliation services (e.g. therapy, psycho-education) among divorcing couples. Participants consist of couples who have filed for divorce but whose divorce has not been finalized. While it is understood that the above six factors are associated with divorce, it remains unknown how they influence reconciliation beliefs and service seeking attitudes of divorcing couples; therefore, no specific hypotheses are made for research questions 7-14 given the exploratory nature of what those specific research questions study. The specific research questions and applicable hypothesis for study 1 are presented below.

RQ1: How is gender associated with divorce initiation?

H₁: Females are more likely to initiate divorce compared to males.

RQ2: How is gender associated with reconciliation beliefs?

H₂: Males are more likely to report reconciliation beliefs than females.

RQ3: How is gender associated with interest in attending a reconciliation service?

H₃: Males are more likely to report interest in attending a reconciliation service than females.

RQ4: To what extent does the divorce initiate also hold reconciliation beliefs?

H₄: Divorce initiating females are less likely to report reconciliation beliefs than non-divorce initiating females are.

H₅: Divorce initiating males are less likely to report reconciliation beliefs than non-

divorce initiating males are.

RQ5: To what extent does the divorce initiate also hold interest in attending reconciliation services?

H₆: Divorce initiating females are less likely to report interest in attending a reconciliation service than non-divorce initiating females are.

H₇: Divorce initiating males are less likely to report interest in attending reconciliation service than non-divorce initiating males are.

RQ6: To what extent are reconciliation beliefs associated with interest in attending a reconciliation services?

H₈: Females with reconciliation beliefs will be positively associated with interest in attending a reconciliation service.

H₉: Males with reconciliation beliefs will be positively associated with interest in attending a reconciliation service.

RQ7: What is the strength of the relationship between the factors of divorce and couple reconciliation status?

RQ8: What is the strength of the relationship between the factors of divorce and interest in attending reconciliation status?

RQ9: Do differences exist between couple reconciliation status groups and divorce factors after controlling for initiate status?

RQ10: Do differences exist between couple interest in reconciliation service status groups

and divorce factors after controlling for initiate status?

RQ11: Do the factors of divorce predict reconciliation status for couples?

RQ12: Do the factors of divorce predict couple interest in reconciliation service status?

RQ13: Do the factors of divorce predict reconciliation beliefs for couples?

RQ14: Do the factors of divorce predict interest in attending reconciliation service for couples?

Manuscript #2

Study 2 is a longitudinal examination of how reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending reconciliation services change across the divorce process. Reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending reconciliation a service were assessed at three different time points: before attending a mandated co-parenting class, immediately after the co-parenting class, and 6 months after the completion of the co-parenting class. Given the exploratory nature of this study and that no previous research has examined reconciliation beliefs after a couple has filled for divorce longitudinally, no specific hypotheses are made.

RQ1: Are there differences in reconciliation beliefs between time 1 and time 2?

RQ2: Are there differences in interest in reconciliation services between time 1 and time 2?

RQ3: Are their differences in reconciliation beliefs from time 1 and time 3?

RQ4: Are their differences in interest in reconciliation services between time 1 and time 3?

RQ5: Are their differences in reconciliation beliefs between time 2 and time 3?

RQ6: Are there differences in interest in reconciliation services between time 2 and time 3?

RQ7: How do couples' reconciliation beliefs change across the divorce process controlling for initiation status and gender?

RQ8: How do couples' interest in receiving reconciliation services change across the divorce process controlling for initiation status and gender?

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MANUSCRIPT #2

Demographers estimate that approximately half of marriages in the United States will end in divorce (Kennedy & Ruggles, 2014). Furthermore, the National Center for Health Statistics report that divorce affects more than 1 million children a year and that approximately 50% of children will experience the divorce of their parents (National Center for Health Statistics, 2008). Given the prevalence of divorce, researchers have long been interested in understanding the impact of divorce on children and their parents.

Children of divorce are at increased risk for conduct problems, emotional problems, lower academic performance, more social problems (Amato, 2014), and more likely to experience physical health problems than individuals in intact families (Anderson, 2014). With approximately, 25% of children experience long term effects of their parent's divorce (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Additionally, it is common for adults going through divorce to experience significant distress due to the loss of emotional support, companionship, and economic security (Amato, 2014).

Allen and Hawkins highlight that deciding whether to divorce or not is one of the

most difficult and stressful decisions that a person may encounter during the life span (Allen & Hawkins, 2017). Previous research has indicated that approximately 25% of divorcing individuals reports a belief that their marriage could be saved (Doherty, Willoughby, & Peterson, 2011). Specifically, 1 out of 3 couples had at least one partner reporting reconciliation beliefs and 10% of both partners reporting beliefs that the marriage doesn't need to end in divorce (Doherty et al., 2011).

The prevalence of reconciliation beliefs among divorcing populations have led researchers to posit that there is remains opportunity to assist couples on the brink of divorce, even after divorce has been filed (Hawkins et al., 2012). Collins, Ellickson, & Klein (2007) posit that before divorce prevention occurs it is necessary to understand the factors that are associated with the divorce process. Additional researchers have noted that there is no one reason why couples divorce (Asante, Osafo, & Nyameke, 2014). The purpose of the present study is to examine how six distinct divorce factors are associated with 1,085 heterosexual couples' who have filed for divorce reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending a reconciliation based service. Specifically, this study examines how differences in raising children, substance use, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and involvement in criminal activity influence a couples' belief the marriage can be saved and their interest in attending a reconciliation based service.

Literature Review

Recent research among a nationally representative sample in the U.S. indicates that 25% of married Americans have had recent thoughts of divorce and that an additional 28% had previous thoughts of divorce but remained married (National Divorce

Decision-Making Project, 2015). Such findings indicate that even beyond couples who have gotten divorced, there is a great deal of individuals who in the process of deciding to end their relationship. Amato (2010) describes this ambiguous stage in the divorce process as “not quite married and not quite divorced” (p. 661).

While the decision to divorce is often meet with significant challenges for parents and children, there is support that for many couples that divorce may be the best option. Specifically, couples from high-conflict marriages report increased well-being after divorce (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). The findings from Amato and Hohmann-Marriott’s research indicates that highly conflictual marriages tend to create maladaptive environments for children and that children from such families tend to demonstrate better outcomes after divorce (2007).

However, there is an expanding body that suggests that for many couples divorce can be prevented. For example, one study found that half of divorces come from low conflict relationships (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). Further research suggests that both men and women typically report that growing apart, lack of attention from their spouse, and communication difficulties as the most common reasons for divorce not high conflict (Hawkings, Willoughby, & Doherty, 2012). Moreover, there is evidence that divorced couples from low-conflict marriages typically report declines in overall wellbeing (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). Additionally, nearly half of divorced individuals report wishing they would have worked harder to resolve their marital differences (Hawkings, et al, 2012).

Divorce Factors

Researchers have noted that there is no one reason why couples divorce (Asante, Osafo, & Nyameke, 2014). However, Collins, Ellickson, & Klein (2007) posit that before divorce prevention occurs it is necessary to understand the factors that are associated with the divorce process. As such, a variety of researchers have identified several factors that are consistently associated with increasing the likelihood of divorce. For example, Amato and Hohmann-Marriott (2007) identified two distinct clusters of divorcing couples. The first cluster was highly conflictual with reports of frequent arguments, physical violence, low commitment to marriage, and higher perceived number of problems. The second cluster consisted of low conflict divorcing couples who reported moderate levels of marital happiness, little physical violence, and infrequent arguments. Similarly, one study found that half of divorces come from low conflict relationships (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007). The present study examines the influence of six distinct factors: differences in raising children, substance use, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and involvement in criminal activity on divorcing parents' reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending a reconciliation.

Differences in Raising Kids

There is a large body of research that indicates that experiences with parenting influence marital quality. All parents experience some level of stress as it relates to parenting (Crinc & Greenberg, 1990). The stress associated with parenting appears to be particularly detrimental when parents disagree with their partners' approach to parenting. For example, one study found a significant association between marital conflict related to parenting issues and decreased marital satisfaction (Cui & Donnellan, 2009). Additional researchers have identified that parenting difficulties as being related to family instability

and problematic child behaviors (Conger, Patterson, & Ge, 1995; Fauber, Forehand, Thomas, & Wierson, 1990; Foreman & Davies, 2003; Ge, Conger, Lorenz, & Simons, 1994). Overall, when experiencing stress, spouses' report greater levels of marital problems and are more likely to blame their spouse (Neff & Karney, 2004).

Researchers have noted that parents begin to question the stability of their marriage when they feel isolated and alone in the child rearing responsibilities (Amato, Booth, Johnson, & Rogers, 2007). There is support that this is particularly true for women. One study found that wives' perception of their husbands parenting efficacy as being related to greater thoughts about divorce (Moore & Buehler, 2011). Moore and Buehler also reported that wives report of their children's problematic externalizing and internalizing behaviors were associated with more thoughts of divorce (2011). Overall, the literature indicates that conflict related to differences in parenting as been associated with increased parental stress and declines in marital satisfaction.

Substance Use

There is a rich body of literature associating substance use and divorce. One study found that individuals who abuse alcohol are 20% more likely to divorce (Kessler, Walters, & Farthofer, 1998). Further research identified that, heavy drinking was particularly associated with divorce (Rognmo, Torvik, Ildstad, & Tambs, 2013). In a US national survey, 11% of men and women reported that substance use played a role in their divorce (Amato & Previti, 2003). Additionally, researchers have noted a higher rate of divorce among alcoholics (Moos, Brennan, Fodacaro, & Moos, 1990) and high rates of alcoholism among couples in marital therapy (Halford & Osgarby, 1993). One study

found that drinking alcohol to intoxication at age 23 was predictive of divorce by age 29 (Collins et al., 2007). Collins and colleagues also reported that marijuana and hard drugs are being a risk factor for divorce (2007).

The influence of substance abuse on relationships is often manifest through other divorce factors. For example, substance use within relationships increases the rate of conflict, violence, job loss, poor health, and legal problems (Leadley, Clark, & Caetano, 2000; Strauss & Gelles, 1996; Caetona & Clark, 1998; Newcomb, 1987). Furthermore, relationship researchers have identified that substance use has been associated with disruptions in the maintenance of the spousal relationship serve as a hindrance to emotional closeness among couples, and prevent partners from fulfilling marital responsibilities and the relationship skills required for continual growth (Baumrind & Moselle, 1985; Collins et al., 2007). Many researchers have concluded there is strong support that substance abuse both directly and indirectly effects marital quality and is associated with an increased risk for divorce (Collins et al., 2007).

Physical, Emotional, and Sexual Abuse

Previous research has identified that Domestic violence and reoccurring conflict increases the likelihood for divorce (Hall & Fincham, 2006; Kurdek, 2002; Amato & Previti, 2004, Sasse, 1997). The overwhelming majority of research on physical, emotional, or sexual abuse is focused on women. For example, one study found that 19% of divorcing mothers reported violence as a major reason for divorcing their male partner (Kurz, 1995). Such findings are consistent with existing research that male partner violence is a significant predictor of female partners' decision to leave abusive

relationships (Bachman and Saltzman, 1995; Ellis and Stuckless, 1996; Hardesty, 2002; Maxwell, 1999; Newmark, Harrell, and Salem, 1995).

Researchers have noted that different types of violence often depend of the sample being studied. For example, Johnson (1995) reported that samples gathered from women shelters are more likely to find greater instances of “patriarchal terrorism” (control motivated violence) whereas more representative samples have higher rates of “common couple violence” (conflict motivated violence). Johnson and Leone (2005) describe “patriarchal terrorism” as being rooted in a general pattern of control and that “common couple violence” being situational couple violence arising out of particular conflicts. Research examining gender and types of physical violence reported that men are more likely to engage in control-motivated violence and male and female partners were equally likely to use violence as a means to resolve specific conflict (Ellis & Stuckless, 1996).

Emotional abuse has also been demonstrated as a means of control and coercion within marriage and a contributing factor for divorce (Ellis & Stuckless, 2006). In fact, research indicates that emotional abuse over long periods of time can be just as damaging or more damaging then physical abuse (Hotton, 2001; O’Leary, 1999). Additionally, when women separate from their partner it tends to help reduce control motivated violence (emotional) then conflict-motivated violence such as physical or sexual abuse (Ellis & Stuckless, 2006).

Overall women who have been physically, emotionally, or sexually abused are more likely to divorce (Bowlus & Seitz, 2006). The present study will examine how

physical, emotional, and sexual abuse are associated with reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending a reconciliation service among divorcing couples.

Criminal Activity

While there is evidence that individuals who engage in criminal behavior tend to be in relationships where their partner is also involved in criminal activity (Farrington, 2011) there is limited research on how partners' criminal involvement is associated with divorce or reconciliation beliefs or attitudes. The overwhelming majority of research examining divorce and criminal activity explore the role of parental divorce on adolescent delinquency (see Rodgers & Pryor, 1998; Wells & Rankin, 1991). Further research has examined the influence of parents' criminal behavior on their children's criminology (Bijleveld & Wijkman; Farrington, Barnes, & Lambert, 1996; Thornberry, 2009). Recent research has indicated that when children are adolescents at the time of their parents' divorce are at increased risk for more violent criminal behavior (Weijer, Thornberry, Bijleveld, & Blokland, 2015).

Given the dearth of research on how involvement in criminal activity is associated with a couples' decision to divorce one of the present studies aim is to extend our understanding of how criminal behavior is associated with divorcing couples self-report of reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending a reconciliation service.

Current Study

In response to Amato & Previti's (2004) call for more research to examine how specific factors of divorce are associated with different post-divorce outcomes this study will examine how: differences in raising children, substance abuse, physical abuse,

emotional abuse, involvement with criminal activity, and sexual abuse are associated with reconciliation beliefs and interest in receiving reconciliation services (e.g. therapy, psycho-education) among divorcing couples. Participants consist of couples who have filed for divorce but whose divorce has not been finalized. While it is understood that the above six factors are associated with divorce it remains unknown how they influence reconciliation beliefs and service seeking attitudes of divorcing couples, therefore no specific hypothesis are made for research questions 7-14 given the exploratory nature of those specific research questions study. The specific research questions and applicable hypothesis for manuscript 1 are presented below.

RQ1: How is gender associated with divorce initiation?

H₁: Females are more likely to initiate divorce compared to males.

RQ2: How is gender associated with reconciliation beliefs?

H₂: Males are more likely to report reconciliation beliefs than females.

RQ3: How is gender associated with interest in attending a reconciliation service?

H₃: Males are more likely to report interest in attending a reconciliation service than females.

RQ4: To what extent does the divorce initiate also hold reconciliation beliefs?

H₄: Divorce initiating females are less likely to report reconciliation beliefs than non-divorce initiating females are.

H₅: Divorce initiating males are less likely to report reconciliation beliefs than non-

divorce initiating males are.

RQ5: To what extent does the divorce initiate also hold interest in attending reconciliation services?

H₆: Divorce initiating females are less likely to report interest in attending a reconciliation service than non-divorce initiating females are.

H₇: Divorce initiating males are less likely to report interest in attending reconciliation service than non-divorce initiating males are.

RQ6: To what extent are reconciliation beliefs associated with interest in attending a reconciliation services?

H₈: Females with reconciliation beliefs will be positively associated with interest in attending a reconciliation service.

H₉: Males with reconciliation beliefs will be positively associated with interest in attending a reconciliation service.

RQ7: What is the strength of the relationship between the factors of divorce and couple reconciliation status?

RQ8: What is the strength of the relationship between the factors of divorce and interest in attending reconciliation status?

RQ9: Do differences exist between couple reconciliation status groups and divorce factors after controlling for initiate status?

RQ10: Do differences exist between couple interest in reconciliation service status

groups and divorce factors after controlling for initiate status?

RQ11: Do the factors of divorce predict reconciliation status for couples?

RQ12: Do the factors of divorce predict couple interest in reconciliation service status?

RQ13: Do the factors of divorce predict reconciliation beliefs for couples?

RQ14: Do the factors of divorce predict interest in attending reconciliation service for couples?

Manuscript #1 Methods

Procedure and Participants

Participants consist of 1,085 heterosexual couples (1,085 males, 1,085 females) who have filed for divorce but are not yet legally divorced. Participant data was collected as part of a mandated divorce education program required by the state of Oklahoma for divorcing individuals with minor aged children. Data was collected at the time of registration for the Co-parenting for Resilience class (CPR). CPR is a 4-hour long class designed to provide divorcing parents skills on how to effectively work with their co-parent in order to remain involved with in the life of their children. Part of the CPR class addresses the potential for reconciliation even at this stage of the divorce process.

Participants reported their ethnicity as follows: 1,667 Caucasian (77.6%), 181 Native American (8.4%), 136 Latino (6.3%), 87 African-American (4.0%), 35 Asian (1.6%), and 43 partisans reported having a mixed ethnicity (2.0%). The highest level of education was also collected. Participants reported their education level as follows: 94

(4.3%) some primary school, 593 (27.4%) graduated high school, 695 (32.1%) attended some college or technical school, 132 (6.1%) completed technical school, 518 (23.9%) bachelor's degree, 102 (4.7%), master's degree, 27 (1.2%) doctorate or professional degree.

Demographics regarding the marriage was also reported. The average length of participants' marriage was 11.76 years (SD=5.71 years). In terms of custody, 65.8% (n=1,376) reported having joint custody of their children, 26.9% (n=585) mothers have sole custody of the children, 4.9% (n=106) fathers had sole custody, 1.1 % (n=24) reported other custody arrangements. It is important to note that female and male participants reported slightly different rates for sole custody. Female participants reported having sole custody 32.2% of the time and that men had sole custody 4.2% of the time. Likewise, male participants reported having sole custody 5.9% of the time and that women had sole custody 23.7% of the time.

Measurement

Factors of Divorce. To assess the extent that differences in raising children, substance abuse, physical violence, emotional abuse, involvement in criminal activity, and sexual abuse contributed to the dissolution of the marriage, participants were asked to respond to the prompt "*How much have each of the following influenced your relationship ending with your co-parent?*" Participants responses to each of the six single-items were coded as such: 1=*not at all*, 2=*a little*, 3=*somewhat*, 4=*a lot*.

Differences in raising children. Participants' reports of how differences in how to raise the children influenced the relationship ending are as follows: M=1.87, SD=1.03.

1,079 (50.1%) participants reported that differences in raising children did not at all influence their decision to divorce, 495 (23%) A little, 358 (16.6%) somewhat, 223 (10.3%) a lot.

Substance Abuse. Participants' reports on how much alcohol and drug use influenced the relationship ending are as follows: $M=1.52$, $SD=.99$.

1,593 (73.4%) participants reported that alcohol and drug use did not at all influence their decision to divorce, 204 (9.5%) A little, 139 (6.5%) somewhat, 214 (10.0%) a lot.

Physical Violence. Participants' reports on how much physical violence influenced the relationship ending are as follows: $M=1.30$, $SD=.76$.

1,782 (83.0%) participants reported that physical abuse did not at all influence their decision to divorce, 177 (8.2%) A little, 85 (4.0%) somewhat, 102 (4.8%) a lot.

Emotional Abuse. Participants' reports on how much emotional abuse influenced the relationship ending are as follows: $M=2.07$, $SD= 1.19$.

1,023 (47.6%) participants reported that emotional abuse did not at all influence their decision to divorce, 387 (18.0%) A little, 312 (14.5%) somewhat, 426 (19.8%) a lot.

Criminal Activity. Participants' reports on how much involvement with criminal activity influenced the relationship ending are as follows: $M=1.13$, $SD= .543$.

2,013 (93.5%) participants reported that criminal activity did not at all influence their decision to divorce, 51 (2.4%) A little, 36 (1.7%) somewhat, 53 (2.5%) a lot.

Sexual Abuse. Participants' reports on how much sexual abuse influenced the relationship ending are as follows: $M=1.08$, $SD=.42$.

2,054 (95.7%) participants reported that sexual abuse did not at all influence their decision to divorce, 40 (1.9%) A little, 25 (1.2%) somewhat, 28 (1.53%) a lot.

Reconciliation. Divorcing parents' beliefs about reconciliation was measured with a single item. "*Even at this point, do you feel your divorce could be prevented if one or both of you works hard to save the marriage?*" Original responses options were measured on a 3-point Likert type continuous scale: 1=*Not at all*, 2=*Somewhat*, 3=*A lot*.

Two different variables were computed from the reconciliation item, *reconciliation belief* and *couple reconciliation status*.

Reconciliation Belief. In order to make distinctions among participants with no reconciliation beliefs and those that reported reconciliation potential, responses 2 and 3 were combined to create a binary outcome variable that was recoded as 0 = *No Reconciliation beliefs*, 1= *potential for reconciliation beliefs*'.

Couple Reconciliation Status. Couples were coded into one of four categories based on how both partners' individual reports of *reconciliation beliefs*. Couples where both partners reported that reconciliation was not possible will be coded as group 1= *female no/male no*. Couples that consisted of the female partner reporting that reconciliation was not possible and the male reporting that reconciliation was possible will be coded as group 2 = *female no/ male yes*. Couples that consisted of the female partner reporting that reconciliation was possible and the male reporting that reconciliation was not possible will be coded as group 3 = *female yes/ male no*. The last

category occurs when both partners report that reconciliation is possible for their relationship and was coded as group 4=*female yes/male yes*.

Reconciliation Service. Divorcing parents' attitude towards participating in a reconciliation service was measured with a single item. "*If a service were offered to help divorcing couples work out their problems and save their marriage would you seriously consider trying it?*" Original responses options were measured on a 3-point Likert type continuous scale: 1=*Not at all*, 2=*Somewhat*, 3=*A lot*. Two different variables were computed from the reconciliation service item, *interest in attending a reconciliation service* and *couple reconciliation service status*.

Interest in Attending a Reconciliation Service. In order to make distinctions among participants with no desire to attend reconciliation services and those that reported potential to attending a reconciliation, responses 2 and 3 were combined to create a binary outcome variable that was recoded as 0 = *no interest in attending a reconciliation service*, 1= *interest in attending a reconciliation service*.

Couple Reconciliation Service Status. Couples were coded into one of four categories based on how both partners individually responded to the reconciliation service seeking attitude question. Couples where both partners reported they were not interested in attending a reconciliation service will be coded as group 1=*female no/male no*. Couples that consisted of the female partner reporting no interest in reconciliation services and the male reporting interest in attending reconciliation services will be coded as group 2 = *female no/ male yes*. Couples that consisted of the female partner reporting interest in reconciliation services and the male reporting no interest in reconciliation

services will be coded as group 3 = *female yes/ male no*. The last category occurs when both partners report interest in attending reconciliation services will be coded as group 4 = *female yes/male yes*.

Initiation Status. Divorce initiation status was assessed with a single item question: “*Did you initiate the divorce?*” Response options included 1 = *yes* or 2 = *no*. Responses were dummy recoded into a binary value scheme where: 0 = *no* and 1 = *yes*.

Overview of Analysis

Chi-squared analysis of independence will be used to examine research question 1-6. Chi-square will be able to examine the relationship between categorical variables. Research question 1 will be tested using the chi-square analysis of independence to examine the relationship between gender and divorce initiation. Research question 2 will be tested using the chi-square analysis of independence to examine the relationship between gender and reconciliation beliefs. Research question 3 will be tested using the chi-square analysis of independence to examine the relationship between gender and interest in attending a reconciliation service. Research question 4 will be tested using the chi-square analysis of independence to examine the relationship between divorce initiating status and reconciliation beliefs, females and males will be analyzed separately. Research question 5 will be tested using the chi-square analysis of independence to examine the relationship between divorce initiating status and interest in attending a reconciliation service, females and males will be analyzed separately. A final chi-square analysis of independence will be conducted to test research question 6, examining the

relationship between reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending reconciliation services females and males will be analyzed separately.

Point-biserial and correlations will be conducted to examine research questions 7 and 8. The Point-biserial correlation coefficient is a measure of the strength of association between a binary variable and continuous-level variable. Research question 7 will use point-biserial correlation to determine the strength of relationship between couple reconciliation status and factors for divorce (differences in raising children, substance abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, involvement with criminal activity, sexual abuse). Research question 8 will use point-biserial correlation to determine the strength of relationship between couple interest in attending reconciliation services status and factors for divorce (differences in raising children, substance abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, involvement with criminal activity, sexual abuse).

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) will be used to test research questions 9 and 10. MANOVA is used to assess for statistical differences on multiple continuous dependent variables by an independent grouping variable. Research question 9 will utilize MANOVA to test if differences exist between couple reconciliation status groups and divorce factors, females and males will be examined separately. Research question 10 will also utilize MANOVA to test if differences exist between couple interest in attending reconciliation service status groups and divorce factors, females and males will be examined separately.

A multinomial logistic regression will be conducted to test research question 11 and 12. Multinomial Logistic Regression is a regression analysis used is to explain the

relationship between one dependent nominal variable with more than two levels and one or more continuous-level independent variables. Additionally, the multinomial logistic regression analysis provides an odds-ratio indicating the predictive likelihood of group membership. Research question 11 will be use multinomial logistic regression to test if the factors of divorce predict reconciliation status for couples. Likewise, research question 12 will use multinomial logistic regression to test if the factors of divorce predict couple interest in attending reconciliation service status. In order to not violate the assumption of independence of observations, a separate multi-nomial logistic regressions will be ran for males and females.

A mixed-effects hierarchical multiple regression will be conducted to test research question 13 and 14. Mixed-effects hierarchical multiple regression provides a way to dyadic data and account for the nesting of couple data without violating the assumption of independence. Research question 13 will use mixed-effects hierarchical multiple regression to to examine if the factors of divorce predict reconciliation beliefs with couple dyads. Similarly, research question 14 will use mixed-effects hierarchical multiple regression to examine if the factors of divorce predict interest in attending reconciliation services within couple dyads.

Results

Research Question #1

Hypothesis #1. To test the hypothesis that females are more likely to initiate divorce than males are a chi-square of independence analysis was conducted. The chi-square test of independence between gender and divorce initiation was significant (χ^2 (1)

= 184.25, $p < .001$). Additionally, the Phi-coefficient test was significant, $\phi = -.30$, $p < .001$ indicating that within this sample females significantly initiate divorce more than men do. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis for hypothesis 1. Females participants reported initiating the divorce 70% ($n=748$) and that they did not initiate the divorce 30% ($n=321$) of the time. Whereas, male participants reported initiating the divorce 40.8% ($n=436$) of the time and the remaining 59.2% ($n=633$) of male participants report they did not initiate the divorce. See figure 1.

Research Question #2

Hypothesis #2. To test the hypothesis that males are more likely to report reconciliation beliefs than females, a chi-square of independence analysis was conducted. The chi-square test of independence between gender and reconciliation beliefs was significant ($\chi^2 (1) = 29.03$, $p < .001$). Additionally, the Phi-coefficient test was significant, $\phi = .12$, $p < .001$ indicating that within this sample males significantly report reconciliation beliefs more than females do. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis for hypothesis 2. Females participants reported a belief that the marriage could be saved 26.4% ($n=274$) and that they did not have reconciliation beliefs 73.6% ($n=763$) of the time. Whereas, male participants reported a belief that the marriage could be saved 37.5% ($n=387$) of the time and the remaining 62.5% ($n=646$) of male participants reported they did not believe that reconciliation was possible. See figure 2.

Research Question #3

Hypothesis #3. To test the hypothesis that males are more likely to report interest in attending a reconciliation service than females, a chi-square of independence analysis

was conducted. The chi-square test of independence between gender and interest in a reconciliation service was significant ($\chi^2 (1) = 36.45, p < .001$). Additionally, the Phi-coefficient test was significant, $\phi = .13, p < .001$ indicating that within this sample that males significantly report greater interest in attending a reconciliation service than females. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis for hypothesis 3. Female participants reported an interest in attending a reconciliation service 29.1% (n=294) of the time and 70.9% (n=718) reported not being interested in attending a reconciliation service. Whereas, male participants reported a interest in attending a reconciliation service 41.9% (n=429) of the time and the remaining 58.1% (n=596) of male participants reported being disinterested in attending a reconciliation service. See figure 3.

Research Question #4

Hypothesis #4. To test the relationship between females who initiate divorce and beliefs for reconciliation a chi-square of independence was used conducted. The chi-square test of independence between divorce initiation status and reconciliation belief among women was significant, ($\chi^2 (1) = 32.09, p < .001$). Additionally, the Phi-coefficient test was significant, $\phi = -.12, p < .001$ indicating that divorcing initiating females are less likely to report reconciliation beliefs that the marriage could be saved. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis for hypothesis 4. Among the female subsample, 70.4% (n=724) reported initiating the divorce and 29.6% (n=304) did not initiate the divorce. Additionally, 78.6% (n=569) of divorce initiating female participants did not believe the marriage could be saved. Furthermore, of the divorce initiating female participants 21.4% (n=155) reported that they believe the marriage could still be saved.

Among female participants who did not initiate the divorce, 61.5% (n=187) reported that they believed that the marriage could not be saved. The remaining 38.5% (n=117) of non-divorce initiating female participants reported beliefs that the marriage could be saved. See figure 4.

Hypothesis #5. To test the relationship between males who initiate divorce and beliefs for reconciliation a chi-square of independence was used conducted. The chi-square test of independence between divorce initiation status and reconciliation belief among men was significant, ($\chi^2 (1) = 53.93, p < .001$). Additionally, the Phi-coefficient test was significant, $\phi = -.23, p < .001$ indicating that divorcing initiating males are statistically less likely to report reconciliation beliefs than non-divorce initiating men. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis for hypothesis 5. Among the male subsample, 41.2% (n=421) reported initiating the divorce and 58.8% (n=600) did not initiate the divorce. Additionally, 75.8% (n=319) of divorce initiating male participants did not believe the marriage could be saved. Furthermore, 24.2% (n=102) of the divorce initiating male participants reported that they did believe the marriage could still be saved. Among male participants who did not initiate the divorce, 53.2% (n=319) reported that they believed that the marriage could not be saved. The remaining 46.8% (n=281) of non-divorce initiating male participants reported beliefs that the marriage could be saved. See figure 5.

Research Question #5

Hypothesis #6. To test the relationship between females who initiate divorce and interest in attending a reconciliation service a chi-square of independence was conducted.

The chi-square test of independence between divorce initiation status and interest to attend a reconciliation service among women was significant, ($\chi^2 (1) = 42.47, p < .001$). Additionally, the Phi-coefficient test was significant, $\phi = -.20, p < .001$ indicating that divorce initiating females are less likely to report interest in attending a reconciliation service compared to the non-divorce initiating women. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis for hypothesis 6. Among the female subsample, 70.4% (n=705) reported initiating the divorce and 29.6% (n=297) did not initiate the divorce. Additionally, 77.3% (n=545) of divorce initiating female participants were not interested in attending a reconciliation service. Furthermore, 22.7% (n=160) of the divorce initiating female participants reported that they were interested in attending a reconciliation service. Among female participants who did not initiate the divorce, 56.9% (n=169) reported no interest in attending reconciliation service. The remaining 43.1% (n=128) of non-divorce initiating female participants reported interest in attending a reconciliation service. See figure 6.

Hypothesis #7. To test the relationship between males who initiate divorce and interest in attending a reconciliation service a chi-square of independence was conducted. The chi-square test of independence between divorce initiation status and interest to attend a reconciliation service among men was significant, ($\chi^2 (1) = 79.15, p < .001$). Additionally, the Phi-coefficient test was significant, $\phi = -.28, p < .001$ indicating that divorce initiating males are less likely to report interest in attending a reconciliation service compared to the non-divorce initiating men. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis for hypothesis 6. Among the male subsample, 40.9% (n=414) reported initiating the divorce and 59.1% (n=599) did not initiate the divorce. Additionally, 74.6%

(n=309) of divorce initiating male participants were not interested in attending a reconciliation service. Furthermore, 25.4% (n=105) of the divorce initiating male participants reported that they were interested in attending a reconciliation service. Among male participants who did not initiate the divorce, 46.6% (n=279) reported no interest in attending reconciliation service. The remaining 53.4% (n=320) of non-divorce initiating female participants reported interest in attending a reconciliation service.

Research Question #6

Hypothesis #8. To test the relationship between females' reconciliation belief and interest in attending a reconciliation service a chi-square of independence was conducted. The chi-square test of independence between reconciliation belief and interest to attend a reconciliation service among women was significant, ($\chi^2 (1) = 466.80, p < .001$). Additionally, the Phi-coefficient test was significant, $\phi = .68, p < .001$ indicating that there is a positive relationship among females who reporting beliefs that the marriage can be saved and interest in attending a reconciliation service. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis for hypothesis 8. Among the female subsample, 26.6% (n=266) reported beliefs that the marriage could be saved. The remaining 73.4% (n=733) reported that reconciliation was not possible. Among the participants that reported reconciliation was possible, 80.1% (n=213) also reported interest in attending reconciliation services. The remaining 19.9% (n=53) reported reconciliation was possible but that they were not interest to attend a reconciliation service. Additionally, 7.4% (n=74) of the females reported no beliefs about saving the marriage but would be interested to attend a reconciliation service. See figure 8.

Hypothesis #9. To test the relationship between males' reconciliation belief and interest in attending a reconciliation service a chi-square of independence was conducted. The chi-square test of independence between reconciliation belief and interest to attend a reconciliation service among men was significant, ($\chi^2(1) = 508.09, p < .001$). Additionally, the Phi-coefficient test was significant, $\phi = .71, p < .001$ indicating that there is a positive relationship among males reporting beliefs that the marriage can be saved and interest in attending a reconciliation service. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis for hypothesis 9. Among the male subsample, 37.8% (n=381) reported beliefs that the marriage could be saved. The remaining 62.2% (n=628) reported that reconciliation was not possible. Among the participants that reported reconciliation was possible, 86.9% (n=331) also reported interest in attending reconciliation services. The remaining 13.1% (n=50) reported reconciliation was possible but that they were not interest to attend a reconciliation service. Additionally, 9.1% (n=92) of the males reported no beliefs about saving the marriage but would be interested to attend a reconciliation service. See figure 9.

Research Question #7

To assess the strength of the relationship between reconciliation belief and divorce factors point-biserial correlations were conducted. There was positive relationship between reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending a reconciliatory service ($r = .70, p < .001$). Additionally, there was a significant relationship to being male and having reconciliatory beliefs ($r = .12, p < .001$). Reconciliation beliefs were negatively associated with physical violence ($r = -.05, p < .05$). The correlations between reconciliation beliefs and differences in raising kids, substance use, emotional abuse, involvement in criminal

activity and sexual abuse were not significant. See table 2.

Research Question #8

To assess the strength of the relationship between interest in attending a reconciliatory service and divorce factors point-biserial correlations were conducted. There was negative relationship between interest in attending a reconciliatory service and physical violence ($r = -.05, p < .05$). Additionally, there was a negative relationship between interest in reconciliation beliefs and involvement with criminal activity ($r = -.05, p < .05$). The correlations between reconciliation beliefs and differences in raising kids, substance use, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse were not significant. Additionally, a correlation was conducted among the divorce factors and are presented in table 2.

Research Question #9

To assess if factors for divorce (difference in raising kids, emotional/verbal abuse, physical abuse, criminal activity, sexual abuse, substance abuse) are different between couple reconciliation belief classifications, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted for each gender. Results from the female MANOVA indicated that the effect of divorce factors on couple reconciliation status was significant, $F(18, 2752.55) = 2.30, p < .005$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .96$, partial $\eta^2 = .014$. Tests between-subject effects indicate that among the female subsample differences in raising children ($F(3, 978) = 3.77; p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .011$), physical violence ($F(3, 978) = 3.17; p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .005$), and emotional or verbal abuse ($F(3, 978) = 9.32; p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .028$) as being significantly different among the couple reconciliation belief classifications. Substance abuse, involvement with criminal activity, and sexual abuse

were not significantly different among the couple reconciliation belief groups.

A post hoc Tukey Honest Significance Difference (Tukey HSD) analysis was conducted to determine among which couple reconciliation status groups are the divorce factors (differences in raising children, physical abuse, and emotional abuse) significantly different. Female participants' report of differences in raising children are significantly higher in reconciliation status group 2 (male yes/ female no) than reconciliation status group 1 (both no), $p < .05$. Additionally, female participant reports of physical violence is significantly higher in status group 2 (male yes/ female no) and than reconciliation status group 1 (both no), $p < .05$. Furthermore, female participant reports of emotional abuse was statistically higher in reconciliation status group 2 (male yes/ female no) than status group 1 (both no), $p < .001$. See figure 10.

Results from the male MANOVA approached significance with $p = .057$ but ultimately the male subsample reported that the effect of divorce factors on couple reconciliation status was not significant, $F(18, 2738.40) = 1.58, p > .05$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .97$, partial $\eta^2 = .010$. See figure 11.

Research Question #10

To assess if factors for divorce (difference in raising kids, emotional/verbal abuse, physical abuse, criminal activity, sexual abuse, substance abuse) are different between couple interest in attending a reconciliation service classification, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted for each gender. Results from the female MANOVA indicated that the effect of divorce factors on couple interest in attending a reconciliation status was significant, $F(18, 2670.52) = 2.22, p < .005$; Wilk's

$\Lambda = .96$, partial $\eta^2 = .014$. Tests between-subject effects indicate that among the female subsample alcohol and drug use ($F(3, 949) = 2.57$; $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .008$), physical violence ($F(3, 949) = 3.00$; $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .009$), and emotional or verbal abuse ($F(3, 949) = 7.40$; $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .023$) as being significantly different among the interest in attending a reconciliation service classifications. Differences in raising children, involvement with criminal activity, and sexual abuse were not significantly different between groups.

A post hoc Tukey Honest Significance Difference (Tukey HSD) analysis was conducted to determine among which interest in attending a reconciliation service classification are the divorce factors (differences in raising children, physical abuse, and emotional abuse) significantly different. Female participants' report of substance use as a divorce factor was significantly higher in reconciliation service status group 2 (male yes/ female no), $p < .05$ than group 1 (both no). Additionally, female participant reports of involvement in criminal activity as a divorce factor was statistically greater in reconciliation status group 2 (male yes/ female no) than reconciliation status group 3 (female yes/male no), $p < .05$. Furthermore, female participant reports of emotional abuse as being a divorce factor was significantly higher higher with interest in attending a reconciliation service status group 2 (male yes/ female no) than reconciliation status group 1 (both no), $p < .001$. See figure 12.

Results from the male MANOVA indicated that the effect of divorce factors on couple interest in attending a reconciliation status was significant, $F(18, 2659.21) = 1.76$, $p < .05$; Wilk's $\Lambda = .97$, partial $\eta^2 = .011$. Tests between-subject effects indicate that among the male subsample, emotional abuse ($F(3, 945) = 4.15$; $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .007$),

as being a significant divorce factor that influences couples' group status for interest in attending a reconciliation service.

A post hoc Tukey Honest Significance Difference (Tukey HSD) analysis was conducted to determine among which interest in attending a reconciliation service classification are the divorce factors (differences in raising children, physical abuse, and emotional abuse) significantly different. Male participants' report of emotional/verbal abuse as a divorce factor was significantly higher in the interest in attending a reconciliation service status group 4 (female yes/male yes), $p < .05$ than group 1 (female no/male no). Additionally, male reports of emotional/verbal abuse as a divorce factor was significantly lower in the interest in attending a reconciliation service group 2 (male yes/female no) than in group 4 (female yes/male yes) $p < .05$. See figure 13.

Research Question #11

To assess if divorce factors were associated with couple reconciliation status group membership status after controlling for divorce initiation status, a multinomial logistic regression was conducted for both male and female participants. Reconciliation couple status group 1 (both no) was used as the reference group. Results from the female model indicate that the data fit the data well ($\chi^2(57) = 148.44, p < .001$). Additionally, using the Cox and Snell Pseudo R^2 the model accounted for 14.1% of the variance of couple reconciliation status among female participants.

Female reports of emotional abuse increased the likelihood of belonging to couple reconciliation status group two (male yes/female no) over reconciliation status group 1 (female no/male no), $z = 3.43, p < .001$. Additionally, female reports of sex abuse

decreased the likelihood of belonging to couple reconciliation status group four (female yes/male yes) over reconciliation status group 1 (female no/male no) $z = -.247, p < .05$.

See table 3.

Results from the male model indicate that the data fit the data well ($\chi^2 (57) = 152.31, p < .001$). Additionally, using the Cox and Snell Pseudo R^2 the model accounted for 14.6% of the variance of couple reconciliation status among male participants.

Male reports of differences in raising children as a divorce factor increased the likelihood of belonging to couple reconciliation status group two (male yes/female no) over reconciliation status group 1 (both no), $z = 2.39, p < .05$. Additionally, male reports of emotional abuse increased the likelihood of belonging to couple reconciliation status group 3 (female yes/male no) over reconciliation status group 1 (both no) $z = 2.90, p < .01$. Males participants who initiated the divorce were more likely to belong to group 3 (female yes/male no) then group 1 (both no) $z = 6.13, p < .001$. See table 3.

Research Question #12

To assess if divorce factors were associated with couples' interest in attending a reconciliation service status group membership status after controlling for divorce initiation status, a multinomial logistic regression was conducted for both male and female participants. Interest in attending a reconciliation couple status group 1 (both no) was used as the reference group. Results from the female model indicate that the data fit the data well ($\chi^2 (57) = 158.25, p < .001$). Additionally, using the Cox and Snell Pseudo R^2 the model accounted for 15.4% of the variance of couple interest in attending a reconciliation service status among female participants.

Female reports of emotional abuse increased the likelihood of belonging to couple interest in attending a reconciliation service status group two (male yes/female no) over reconciliation status group 1 (both no). Specifically, a one-unit increase in emotional abuse was associated with a .23 increase in belonging to group 2 (male yes/female no) over group 1 (both no) $z = 2.91, p < .01$. Furthermore, female reports of emotional abuse was associated with an increase likelihood of belonging to interest in attending a reconciliation service group 4 (both yes) than group 1 (both no), $z = 2.14, p < .05$.

Additionally, Female reports of sex abuse decreased the likelihood of belonging to couple interest in attending reconciliation service status group four (both yes) over reconciliation status group 1 (both no) $z = -.239, p < .05$. Females, who initiated the divorce were more more likely to belong to interest in attending a reconciliation service status group 2 (male yes/female no) than group 1 (both no) $z = 6.58, p < .001$. See table 4.

Results from the male model indicate that the data fit the data well ($\chi^2(57) = 164.09, p < .001$). Additionally, using the Cox and Snell Pseudo R^2 the model accounted for 16.0% of the variance of couple interest in attending reconciliation service status among male participants.

Male reports of physical abuse as a divorce factor decreased the likelihood of belonging to couple reconciliation status group two (male yes/female no) over reconciliation status group 1 (both no), $z = -2.51, p < .05$. Additionally, male reports of emotional abuse increased the likelihood of belonging to couple interest in attending a reconciliation service status group 4 (both yes) over couple interest in attending a reconciliation service status group 1 (both no) $z = 3.18, p < .001$. Males participants who initiated the divorce were more likely to belong to group 3 (female yes/male no) than

group 1 (both no) $z=6.53$, $p<.001$. See table 4.

Research Question 13

The multi-level regression model examining the relationship between the six divorce factors and reconciliation beliefs, controlling for gender and divorce initiation status within the divorcing couple was not significant below the $p<.05$ level. See table 5.

Research Question 14

The multi-level regression model examining the relationship between the six divorce factors and the couples interest in attending a reconciliation service, controlling for gender and divorce initiation status within the divorcing couple was not significant below the $p<.05$ level. See table 6.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine how participant gender and divorce initiation status, in conjunction with selected divorce factors (differences of raising children, substance use, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and involvement in criminal activity) are associated with reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending a reconciliation service among divorcing couples. Consistent with previous research, female participants were more likely to initiate the divorce than male participants (Doherty et al., 2011). Furthermore, men (37.5%) were more likely to report beliefs that the marriage could be saved compared to females (26.4%). The present study also provides additional support found in other studies that regardless of gender the divorce initiate was less likely to report reconciliation beliefs (Doherty et al., 2011;

Vaughn, 1986).

One of the unique contributions of this study is examining to what extent divorce initiators report reconciliation beliefs. Specifically, within this sample 21.4% of female divorce initiators reported reconciliation beliefs and 24.2% of male divorce initiators reported reconciliation beliefs. In regards to couples reported interest in attending a reconciliation based service, 41.9% of male participants and 29.1% of female participants reported interest to attend. While divorce initiating partners were less likely to report an interest to attend a reconciliation service, 22.7% of the divorce initiating female participants and 25.4% of divorce initiating male participants reported that they were interested in attending a reconciliation service. Such findings provide valuable insight that for a significant number of divorce initiating partners there remains a hope for reconciliation and an interest to work on the relationship.

Researchers and clinicians may all too often assume that relatively few divorce initiators hold reconciliation beliefs. The present research provides support that approximately 1 in 4 divorce initiators are reporting a belief and interest in reconciling even after filing for divorce. Such finds are consistent with Hawkins and colleagues (2012) that there is more opportunity to repair relationships than often assumed.

In order to examine reconciliation beliefs and an interest to attend a reconciliation service among divorcing parents, two couple level variables were computed to examine if divorce factors are associated with their couple reconciliation belief classification and couple interest to attend a reconciliation service classification. Couples could belong to one of four groups depending on how each partner reported their reconciliation beliefs

and interest to attend a reconciliation service. The possible groups: female no/male no (group 1), female no/male yes (group2), female yes/male no (group 3), and female yes/male yes (group 4). The reconciliation belief classifications of the 1,085 couples are as follows: 46.9% (n=941) belonged to group 1 (female no/male no), 27.1% (n=544) belonged to group 2 (female no/male yes), 15.6% (n=314) belonged to group 3 (female yes/male no), and 10.4% (n=208) belonged to group 4 (female yes/male yes). In regards to interest in attending a reconciliation service classification: 42.1% (n=818) belonged to group 1 (female no/male no), 29% (n=564) belonged to group 2 (female no/male yes), 16% (n=312) belonged to group 3 (female yes/male no), and 12.9% (n=250) belonged to group 4 (female yes/male yes).

Within the present study some of the most salient results have to deal with how the factors of divorce are experienced differently based on the gender. Results from the multinomial logistic regression indicated that female reports of emotional abuse as a divorce factor increasing the likelihood of belonging to group 2 (female no/male yes) than group 1 (female no/male no). Additionally, female reports of sex abuse of as a divorce factor increased the likelihood of belonging to group 1 (female no/male no) than group 4 (female yes/males yes) for both the reconciliation beliefs and interest to attend a reconciliation service model. Sex abuse in previous research has been linked to increased likelihood of divorce among women (Bowlus & Seitz, 2006). As such it is not surprising that women's' report of sexual abuse as a divorce factor negatively associated with reconciliation beliefs or interest in attending reconciliation services.

Results from the reconciliation belief multinomial logistic model for men indicates that when males' report differences in raising children as a divorce factor they

are more likely to belong to group 2 (female no/male yes) than group 1 (female no/male no). One interpretation of this finding is that males may have a higher tolerance for conflicts surrounding raising the children than their female partners. One way this is potentially manifest is through the female partner indicating no reconciliation beliefs and the male partner simultaneously reporting differences in raising children and reconciliation beliefs. Previous research has identified that when wives' have a negative perception of their husbands parenting efficacy they are more likely to have thoughts about divorce (Moore & Buehler, 2011). Additionally, in the interest to attend a reconciliation service model, males' reports of physical violence as a divorce factor increases the likelihood of belonging to group 1 (female no/male no) than group 2 (female no/male yes). Such findings are intuitive and it is likely that individuals engaged in physical abuse are reluctant to access social services due to fear of potential consequences for their violence.

Perhaps the most intriguing finding from the present study is the influence of male reports of emotional abuse on his female partners' reconciliation beliefs and interest to attend a reconciliation service. In both models, males report of emotional abuse as a divorce factor increase the likelihood of belonging to a group where the female partner has reconciliation beliefs or an interest to attend a reconciliation service. While initially counter intuitive, there is a growing body of research linking relationship satisfaction on the male partner's relationship awareness (Ubando, 2016). Perhaps with the present sample, when the female partner perceives that her male partner is aware of the emotional climate of the marriage, she perceives that there is more hope to work on the relationship and as such reports greater beliefs of reconciling and an interest to attend a reconciliation

service then female partners who perceive their male partner as unaware of the emotional damage occurring in the relationship. Alternatively, it is possible that female partners are the emotional abusive partner and they may report reconciliation beliefs despite their emotional abuse.

Implications for Theory

The present study provides support that even after filing for divorce there are significant amounts of divorcing parents who report a desire to work on the marriage. The majority of researchers have approached reconciliation from an attachment theoretical framework (see Doherty et al., 2011). Researchers have identified that attachment theory helps shed some light onto why some divorcing parents would be cautious about severing the relational bonds with their partner (Davilla et al., 1998; Doherty et al., 2011). Additionally research has identified that divorce is a major disrupter in attachment relationships (Davila & Cobb; 2004; Main, Hesse, & Hesse, 2011) and that stress from significant changes in life circumstance has been associated with shifts in individuals' perception of relationships (Seseman et al., 2016). However, Allen and Hawkins (2017) argue that previous conceptualizing of reconciliation may not accurately capture the divorce experience. The divorce factors in this study provide additional insight into how the reasons a couple is divorcing may influence their willingness to leave their spouse or reconcile. For example, mothers may be more willing to divorce when they report sexual abuse as a divorce factor or perceive that their children are experiencing distress (Bowlus & Seitz, 2006; Moore & Buehler, 2011). Yet, when mothers perceive their male partner's emotional awareness they may go through the divorce the process with greater reluctance to disrupt their relational bonds with their

spouse. For men, their report of physical violence is associated with decreased reconciliation beliefs. In a review of relational decision-making theories, Allen and Hawkins identified that social exchange theory (Charvoz, Bodenmann, Bertoni, Lafrate, & Giuliana, 2008), risk and resilience (Few & Rosen, 2005), feminism (Hewitt, Western, & Baxter, 2006), and narrative theories (Kanewischer & Harris, 2015) have also been used to explain decisions to stay or leave relationships. It is possible that the degree of fit between theory and the lived experience of divorcing couples attempting to reconcile is associated with what factors are prompting the divorce.

Future Research

This study provides support that examining how the factors leading a couple to divorce holds potential to inform reconciliatory attitudes. The present study assessed divorcing parents' perceptions of reconciliation before attending a mandated divorce education class. Future research could examine if the reconciliation beliefs are stable across the divorce process and what impact divorce education classes have on divorcing parents' beliefs regarding reconciliation. Furthermore, this study examined what extent differences in raising children, substance use, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and involvement in criminal activity influenced couples' decision to divorce. Future research could examine the level of agreeableness of what factors are prompting the divorce decision and how it may relate to reconciliation beliefs or interest to attend a reconciliation based service.

Limitations

While the present study makes substantial contributions in the study of reconciliation among divorcing couples it is not without limitations. One of the most substantial limitations is the nature in which the divorce factors are measured. Each factor was a single item and only assessing how much the item contributed to the dissolution of the relationship. The divorce factors make no distinctions between which partner was accountable for the potential divorce factor. For example, there is no way of determining if physical abuse was one partner physical assaulting the other or co-combative. Such limitations are problematic given the different relational outcomes associated with different types of physical violence.

Another important limitation is that the divorce factors selected for this study are more associated with higher conflict divorces. It is possible that the given factors are not accurately capturing the divorce experience for many couples. Previous research indicates that approximately half of divorcing couples do so based on less conflictual reasons (Hawkins et al., 2012) then the present studies divorce factors (physical, emotional, sexual abuse, etc.)

An additional limitation is the way reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending a reconciliation service were measured. Variables were also single items measured on a three point Likert-type scale. As such, there is severely limited variance and it is likely that the items are not capturing all the nuances associated with reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending.

The results of the multilevel models were not significant. This is most likely due to the above measurement limitations. It is likely that increasing the amount of response

options and using scales that have undergone parametric testing rather than single items will more accurately measure their intended constructs. It is also valuable to note that while the multinomial logistic models where significant they only accounted for between 14-16% of the variance for reconciliation beliefs and interest to attend reconciliation services. In addition to better measurement, there are many other factors that could influence reconciliatory attitudes such as length of marriage, number of previous marriages, age of children, mental health, and social economic factors. Furthermore, the chi-square test of independence was frequently used throughout manuscript 1. While the goodness-of-fit indices suggest that the models fit the data well it is important to note that chi-square is sensitive to large sample sizes.

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MANUSCRIPT #2

Divorce researchers have identified that many couples enter the divorce process maintaining a belief that the marriage could be repaired. Doherty, Willoughby, and Peterson's (2011), seminal research on reconciliation indicated that among divorcing parents who had attended a mandated co-parenting divorce education class 25% (1 in 3 men and 1 in 5 women) reported that they believed their marriage could be saved. Furthermore, approximately 10% of divorcing couples consisted of both partners indicating reconciliatory beliefs (Doherty, Willoughby, & Peterson, 2011). Given the prevalence of reconciliation beliefs among divorcing couples, Hawkins and colleagues have suggested that there often remains potential to repair many relationships even after divorce has been filed (Hawkins, Willoughby, & Doherty, 2012).

Despite empirical support for reconciliation beliefs and divorcing couples interest to participate in a reconciliation based service among divorcing populations there has been no known research examining the stability of reconciliation beliefs across time. The purpose of this manuscript is to examine reconciliation beliefs and divorcing parents' interest to to attend a reconciliation service longitudinally across three time points after participants have already filing for divorce.

Literature review

On average a person considers divorce for 2 years before the actual legal filing for divorce (Wallar & MacDonald, 2007). There is strong support within the body of divorce literature that the individual who initiates the divorce experiences better post-divorce adjustment (Hewitt & Turrell, 2011; Wilson, & Weignand, 2010; Buehler, 1987; Pettit & Bloom, 1984; Rossiter, 1991; Sweeney, 2002; & Lowey, 2008). The decision to divorce frequently leaves the initiating partner with feelings of guilt for terminating the marriage and the emotional pain the divorce may potentially cause their children and former spouse (Wilson, & Weignand, 2010). Despite feelings of guilt, the divorce initiating partner typically has been able to emotionally and psychologically remove themselves from the marriage and are overall better equipped for post-divorce adjustment (Hewitt & Turrell, 2011; Lowey, 2008; Wilson, & Weignand, 2010).

Divorce for non-initiating partners is frequently met with feelings of rejection, confusion, helplessness and being powerless over the divorce process (Feeney & Monin, 2008; Hewitt & Turrell, 2011; Sakraida, 2005; Worden, 2009). Overall, there is strong support that the non-divorce initiating partner typically experiences more psychological and emotional distress compared to the divorce initiating partner (Baum, 2003). Furthermore, research has indicated that the non-initiating partner is more likely to report reconciliation beliefs after a couple files for divorce than initiating partners (Doherty et al., 2011).

Despite divorce initiation status being widely regarded as an important status to consider among divorcing populations, initiation status has not been studied longitudinally in regards to reconciliation beliefs. The current study will examine differences in reconciliation

belief and interest in attending reconciliation based services taking into account participants divorce initiation status.

Gender

While both partners contribute to the dissolution of the marriage, divorce researchers have long noted that gender has implications across the divorce process (Amato & Previti, 2003; Baum, 2003). For example, women going through divorce tend to mourn the loss of the marital relationship, while men tend to grieve the changes related to fatherhood (i.e. decreased contact with their children) rather than loss of marital partner (Riessman, 1990). Furthermore, there is support that divorcing men and women grieve at different times during the divorce process (Baum, 2003). For example, research on post-divorce adjustment indicates that that women typically experience the most distress while married and in the midst of a conflictual relationships (Diedrich, 1991). Women also initiate the divorce two-thirds of the time (Amato & Previti, 2003). Whereas men experience less distress during the divorce decision making experience but experience greater post divorce distress than women (Diedrich, 1991). Fatherhood researchers have theorized that often fathers' disengagement after divorce is associated to unresolved grief surrounding the divorce (Arendell, 1992). It is important to note that research indicates that when men are the divorce initiate they are likely to experience distress earlier in the divorce process (Baum, 2003).

In regards to patterns of coping with divorce, men tend to cope with post-divorce adjustment through increased engagement with work and self-medicating through alcohol (Reissman, 1990). Women on the other hand are more likely to express their emotional pain and depression associated with divorce to supportive friends and family (Reissman, 1990;

Mandell, 1995). Furthermore, research has indicated that women's age at divorce is associated with different post-divorce outcomes. Specifically, middle-aged women experience more severe loneliness, depression, and anxiety compared to younger divorcing women (Bogulob, 1995; Wallerstein, 1986). Additionally, divorced women had overall poorer immune functioning compared to married women (Kiecolt-Glaser, Fisher, Ogrocki, Stout, Speicher, & Glaser, 1987; Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001).

Given the rich literature of gender based differences of the divorce process, the current study will examine if gender is associated with differences in participant reports of reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending reconciliation based services across each wave of data collection.

Co-Parenting

Children of divorce are at increased risk for conduct problems, emotional problems, lower academic performance, more social problems (Amato, 2014), and more likely to experience physical health problems than individuals in intact families (Anderson, 2014). With approximately, 25% of children experiencing long term effects of their parents' divorce (Heatherington & Kelly, 2002). However, when parents are able to communicate effectively with their co-parent after divorce and maintain frequent contact with their children, their children exhibit better post-divorce adjustment (Amato, 2014; Davies, Sturge, Cicchetti, & Cummings, 2007). Co-parenting refers to continual involvement between parents in relation to their children (Hardesty, Khaw, Chung, & Martin, 2008) and has been associated with greater resilience for children experiencing the divorce of their parents (Amato, 1993).

In recognition of the positive benefits of co-parenting for children after the majority of states in the United States offer divorce education curriculum for divorcing parents (Mulroy et al., 2013). Such programs are designed to inform divorcing parents how they can minimize the risk of divorce on children (Amato, 2014). Forty-six out of 50 states in the U.S. require divorcing parents to participate in a co-parenting class before finalizing the divorce (Mulroy, Riffe, Brandon, Lo & Vaidyanath, 2013). Studies examining the efficacy of co-parenting classes have identified that divorce education programs have been useful in reducing conflict between co-parents and increasing participants' understanding of how their divorce is impacting their children (LaGraff, Stolz, & Brandon, 2015 & Brandon, 2010). Furthermore, after taking a co-parenting class, participants report improved parent-child relationships, better child wellbeing, and increased parent wellbeing as a result of participating in co-parenting class (Salem, Sandler, & Wolchik, 2013).

While the primary goals of divorce education programs are not to influence divorcing couples to reconcile they do hold potential to intervene with divorcing populations who have filed for divorce but are not yet legally divorced. Previous research on reconciliation beliefs and interest to attend a reconciliation service have often been assessed during divorce education programs (see Doherty et al., 2011). Further research is needed to assess to what extent divorce education programs influence reconciliation beliefs and to examine changes in reconciliation beliefs across the divorce process. The present study examines divorcing individuals reports of reconciliation beliefs and interest to attend a reconciliation service across three distinct waves of data collection: as part of class registration, immediately following a co-parenting divorce education class, and a six months after completing the divorce education class.

Current Study

Manuscript 2 is a longitudinal examination of how reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending reconciliation services change across the divorce process. Reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending reconciliation a service were assessed at three different time points: before attending a mandated co-parenting class, immediately after the co-parenting class, and 6 months after the completion of the co-parenting class. Given the exploratory nature of this study and no previous research has examined reconciliation beliefs after a couple has filled for divorce longitudinally no specific hypothesis are made.

RQ1: Are there differences in reconciliation beliefs between time 1 and time 2?

RQ2: Are there differences in interest in reconciliation services between time 1 and time 2?

RQ3: Are their differences in reconciliation beliefs from time 1 and time 3?

RQ4: Are their differences in interest in reconciliation services between time 1 and time 3?

RQ5: Are their differences in reconciliation beliefs between time 2 and time 3?

RQ6: Are their differences in interest in reconciliation services between time 2 and time 3?

RQ7: How stable are reconciliation beliefs across each wave of data?

RQ8: How stable are interest in attending a reconciliation service across each wave of data?

RQ9: How do couples' reconciliation beliefs change across the divorce process controlling for initiation status and gender?

RQ10: How do couples' interest in receiving reconciliation services change across the

divorce process controlling for initiation status and gender?

Manuscript #2 Methods

Procedure and Participants

The sample consists of 376 individuals filing for divorce with minor aged children in Oklahoma who participated in the Co-parenting for Resilience (CPR) divorce education program. Divorcing parents in Oklahoma are mandated to attend CPR after filling for divorce and must complete it before the divorce can be finalized. CPR is a 4-hour long class designed to provide divorcing parents skills on how to effectively work with their co-parent in order to remain involved with in the life of their children. Part of the CPR class addresses the potential for reconciliation even at this stage of the divorce process. Data was collected at three different times: participants completed online surveys at the time of registration for the CPR class, immediately after attending the class, and at 6 months after completing the class. Participants received compensation for participating in the 6-month follow-up.

Among the 376 participants, 44.4% (n=167) identified as female and the remaining 55.6% (n=209) identified as male. Participants reported their ethnicity as follows: 273 Caucasian (74.2%), 28 Native American (7.6%), 29 Latino (7.9%), 28 African-American (7.6%), 5 Asian (1.4%), and 5 participants reported having a mixed ethnicity (1.4%). The highest level of education was also collected. Participants reported their education level as follows: 20 (5.3%) some primary school, 110 (29.3%) graduated high school, 117 (31.2%) attended some college of technical school, 22 (5.9%) completed technical school, 86 (22.9%) bachelor's degree, 18 (4.8%), master's degree, 2 (0.5%) doctorate or professional degree.

Demographics regarding the marriage was also reported. For 233 (61.97%) participants this was the dissolution of their first marriage, the remaining 143 (38.03%) indicated that they had been previously married and divorced before the dissolution of the marriage with their current partner. The average length of participants' marriage was 10.33 years (SD=5.71 years). In terms of custody, 53.8% (n=186) reported having joint custody of their children, 26.0% (n=90) reported having sole custody of the children, 19.7% (n=68) reported their co-parent as having custody, and 0.6 % (n=2) reported other custody arrangements.

Measurement

Reconciliation. Divorcing parents' beliefs about reconciliation was measured with a single item at three different waves of data collection: at registration before attending the CPR class, immediately following the CPR class, and six-months following the class. Participants reported their reconciliation beliefs by answering the prompt "*Even at this point, do you feel your divorce could be prevented if one or both of you works hard to save the marriage?*" Original responses options were measured on a continuous 3-point Likert type continuous scale: 1=*Not at all*, 2=*Somewhat*, 3=*A lot*.

Reconciliation Service. Divorcing parents' interest towards participating in a reconciliation service was measured with a single item at three different waves of data collection: at registration before attending the CPR class, immediately following the CPR class, and six-months following the class. Participants were asked to respond "*If a service were offered to help divorcing couples work out their problems and save their marriage*

would you seriously consider trying it?” Original responses options were measured on a continuous 3-point Likert type continuous scale: 1=*Not at all*, 2=*Somewhat*, 3=*A lot*.

Initiation Status. Divorce initiation status was assessed with a single item question: “*Did you initiate the divorce?*” Response options included 1= *yes* or 2 = *no*. Responses were dummy recoded into a binary value scheme where: 0 = *no* and 1 = *yes*.

Overview of Analysis

The purpose of research questions 1-8 are to establish basic descriptive (e.g. frequency, percentage) for how participants’ reconciliation beliefs and interest in a reconciliation service fluctuates between the three waves of data collection. In order to so, several descriptive variables will need to be computed before they can be analyzed. To test research question 1 and 2, a new variable will be computed by subtracting participants’ time 2 reconciliation reconciliation belief and interest in reconciliation services belief response from time 1. Values of zero indicate no change in reconciliation belief from time 1 to time 2. A positive value indicates movement to stronger reconciliation belief. A negative value indicates a decrease in reconciliation beliefs. In order to determine what their baseline reconciliation belief value was output will be organized by participants’ time 1 reconciliation belief response. Organizing the output from base line will allow us to make distinctions between what groups experience movement in their reconciliation beliefs. Research questions 3-6 will follow a similar process. Once the new variables have been computed chi-square test of independence will be used to test differences between groups.

Research questions 7-8, will sum all the dummy coded reconciliation belief and interest in attending a reconciliation service from each wave of data. Scores of 0 indicate

there was no reconciliation beliefs across each wave, score of 1 indicates that there were reconciliation beliefs at 1 time period, score of 2 indicates that there were reconciliation beliefs at 2 time period, and a score of 3 indicates that there were reconciliation beliefs at all 3 time periods.

Research questions 9-10 will be examined using piecewise regression. Specifically, piecewise regression modeling will be used to test the interaction between participant gender and divorce initiation status on reconciliation beliefs and interest to attend a reconciliation service for each of the three waves of data collection.

Manuscript 2 Results

Research Question #1

To assess changes in reconciliation belief between time 1 and time 2 a chi-square of independence analysis was conducted. The chi-square test of independence between reconciliation belief at time 1 and reconciliation belief at time 2 was not significant ($\chi^2(1) = 287, p > .05$). Additionally, the Phi-coefficient test was not significant, $\phi = -.04, p > .05$ indicating that within this sample there is no statistical association between reconciliation beliefs at time 1 and reconciliation beliefs at time 2.

Forty-six percent (n=132) reported no reconciliation beliefs at both time 1 and time 2. There was 69 participants (24%) who reported no reconciliation beliefs at time 1 but did at time 2. Twenty percent (n=60) reported reconciliation beliefs at time 1 and no reconciliation beliefs at time 2. The remaining 9.1% reported reconciliation at both time 1 and time 2. See figure 14.

Research Question #2

To assess changes in interest in attending a reconciliation service between time 1 and time 2 a chi-square of independence analysis was conducted. The chi-square test of independence between interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 1 and interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 2 was not significant ($\chi^2 (1) = 290, p > .05$).

Additionally, the Phi-coefficient test was not significant, $\phi = -.001, p > .05$ indicating that within this sample there is no statistical association between interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 1 and interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 2.

Forty percent (n=116) reported no interest to attend a reconciliation service at both time 1 and time 2. There were 82 participants (28.3%) who reported no interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 1 but did at time 2. Eighteen percent (n=54) reported interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 1 and no interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 2. The remaining 13.1%(n=38) reported an interest to attend a reconciliation service at both time 1 and time 2. See figure 15.

Research Question #3

To assess changes in reconciliation belief between time 1 and time 3 a chi-square of independence analysis was conducted. The chi-square test of independence between reconciliation belief at time 1 and reconciliation belief at time 3 was not significant ($\chi^2 (1) = 247, p > .05$). Additionally, the Phi-coefficient test was not significant, $\phi = .03, p > .05$ indicating that within this sample there is no statistical association between reconciliation beliefs at time 1 and reconciliation beliefs at time 3.

Forty-two percent (n=104) reported no reconciliation beliefs at both time 1 and time 3. There were 59 participants (23.9%) who reported no reconciliation beliefs at time 1 but did at time 3. Twenty percent (n=51) reported reconciliation beliefs at time 1 and no reconciliation beliefs at time 3. The remaining 13.4% (n=33) reported reconciliation beliefs at both time 2 and time 3. See figure 16.

Research Question #4

To assess changes in interest in attending a reconciliation service between time 1 and time 3 a chi-square of independence analysis was conducted. The chi-square test of independence between interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 1 and interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 3 was not significant ($\chi^2 (1) = 246, p > .05$). Additionally, the Phi-coefficient test was not significant, $\phi = -.04, p > .05$ indicating that within this sample there is no statistical association between interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 1 and interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 3.

Thirty-nine percent (n=98) reported no interest to attend a reconciliation service at both time 1 and time 3. There were 66 participants (26.8%) who reported no interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 1 but did at time 3. Twenty-one percent (n=52) reported interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 1 and no interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 3. The remaining 12.2%(n=30) reported an interest to attend a reconciliation service at both time 1 and time 3. See figure 17.

Research Question #5

To assess changes in reconciliation belief between time 2 and time 3 a chi-square of independence analysis was conducted. The chi-square test of independence between reconciliation belief at time 2 and reconciliation belief at time 3 was not significant ($\chi^2 (1) = 245, p > .05$). Additionally, the Phi-coefficient test was not significant, $\phi = -.06, p > .05$ indicating that within this sample there is no statistical association between reconciliation beliefs at time 2 and reconciliation beliefs at time 3.

Forty percent (n=98) reported no reconciliation beliefs at both time 2 and time 3. There were 65 participants (26.5%) who reported no reconciliation beliefs at time 2 but did at time 3. Twenty-two percent (n=54) reported reconciliation beliefs at time 2 and no reconciliation beliefs at time 3. The remaining 11.4% (n=28) reported reconciliation beliefs at both time 2 and time 3. See figure 18.

Research Question #6

To assess changes in interest in attending a reconciliation service between time 2 and time 3 a chi-square of independence analysis was conducted. The chi-square test of independence between interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 2 and interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 3 was not significant ($\chi^2 (1) = 249, p > .05$). Additionally, the Phi-coefficient test was not significant, $\phi = -.11, p > .05$ indicating that within this sample there is no statistical association between interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 2 and interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 3.

Twenty-nine percent (n=73) reported no interest to attend a reconciliation service at both time 2 and time 3. There were 66 participants (26.5%) who reported no interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 2 but did at time 3. Twenty-eight percent (n=70) reported

interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 2 and no interest to attend a reconciliation service at time 3. The remaining 16.1%(n=40) reported an interest to attend a reconciliation service at both time 2 and time 3. See figure 19.

Research Question #7

After analyzing the frequencies for reconciliation beliefs, 36.2% (n=136) reported no reconciliation beliefs across each wave of data. Additionally, 44.9% (n=169) reported reconciliation beliefs at 1 wave and no reconciliation beliefs for 2 waves. Furthermore, 16.8% reported reconciliation beliefs at 2 waves of data and no reconciliation beliefs for 1 wave. The remaining 2.1% (n=8) reported reconciliation beliefs at all three waves of data collection. See table 7.

Research Question #8

After analyzing the frequencies for interest to attend a reconciliation service 20.3% (n=43) reported no interest in attending a reconciliation service across each wave of data. Additionally, 44.3% (n=94) reported interest to attend a reconciliation service at 1 wave and no interest to attend a reconciliation service for 2 waves. Furthermore, 30.7% reported interest in attending a reconciliation service at 2 waves of data and no interest to attend a reconciliation service for 1 wave. The remaining 4.7% (n=10) reported interest to attend a reconciliation service at all three waves of data collection. See table 7.

Research Question #9

Three different piecewise regressions were conducted while examining reconciliation beliefs among participants. Results of the first piecewise regression examining reconciliation

beliefs across the three waves of data indicated that the regression between time 2 and time 3 reconciliation beliefs was significant $p < .001$, $Z = 7.42$, $\beta = .52$. Indicating a significant increase of reconciliation beliefs increased from after the class and the 6-month follow up. The regression between reconciliation beliefs at time 1 and reconciliation beliefs at time 2 was not significant at the $p < .05$. See figure 20.

Results of the second piecewise regression model examining reconciliation beliefs including gender indicated that the regression between indicated that the regression between time 2 and time 3 reconciliation beliefs remained significant ($p < .001$, $Z = 4.82$, $\beta = .52$) holding gender and the regression between time 1 and time 2 constant. Indicating a significant increase of reconciliation beliefs increased from after the class and the 6-month follow up. Gender and the regression between reconciliation beliefs at time 1 and reconciliation beliefs at time 2 was not significant at the $p < .05$ level. Additionally, the interaction between gender and the regression between time 1 and time 2 was not significant at the $p < .05$ level. Likewise, the interaction between gender and the regression between time 2 and time 3 was not significant at the $p < .05$ level. See figure 21.

The final piecewise regressing examining reconciliation beliefs, gender, and divorce initiation status across the three waves of data indicated that divorce initiation was negatively associated with reconciliation beliefs ($p < .01$, $Z = -3.02$, $\beta = -.72$) holding gender, the regression between time 1 and time 2, the regression between time 2 and time 3 constant. Indicating that divorce initiates are is significantly associated with decreased reconciliation beliefs. Additionally, the interaction between divorce initiation and the regression between

time 1 and time 2 was significant ($p < .05$, $Z = 2.01$, $\beta = .30$). Indicating that divorce initiating individuals have a significant increase in reconciliation from time 1 to time 2. See figure 22.

Research Question #10

Three different piecewise regressions were conducted examining participant reported interest to attend a reconciliation service. Results of the first piecewise regression examining interest in attending a reconciliation service across the three waves of data was not significant at the $p < .05$ level. The regression between time 1 and time 2 approached significance ($p = .054$). See figure 23.

Results of the second piecewise regression model examining interest in attending a reconciliation service including gender indicated that the regression between time 1 and time 2's interest in attending a reconciliation belief was significant ($p < .05$, $Z = 2.04$, $\beta = .19$) holding gender and the regression between time 2 and time 3 constant. Indicating a significant increase in attending a reconciliation service from time 1 to time 2. Additionally, the interaction between gender and the regression from time 2 to time 3 is significant indicating that males are reporting an increased interest in attending a reconciliation service from after the co-parenting class to the six month follow up. furthermore, the interaction between gender and the regression between time 1 and time 2 was not significant at the $p < .05$ level. Likewise, the interaction between gender and the regression between time 2 and time 3 was not significant at the $p < .05$ level. See figure 24.

The final piecewise regressions examining reconciliation beliefs, gender, and divorce initiation status across the three waves of data indicated that divorce initiation was negatively associated with reconciliation beliefs ($p < .01$, $Z = -3.02$, $\beta = -.72$) holding gender, the

regression between time 1 and time 2, the regression between time 2 and time 3 constant. Indicating that divorce initiates are is significantly associated with decreased reconciliation beliefs. Additionally, the interaction between divorce initiation and the regression between time 1 and time 2 was significant ($p < .05$, $Z = 2.01$, $\beta = .30$). Indicating that divorce initiating individuals have a significant increase in reconciliation from time 1 to time 2. Furthermore, the interaction between gender and the regression between time 2 and time 3 was significant ($p < .05$, $Z = 2.51$, $\beta = .33$), indicating an increased interest in attending a reconciliation service for men from after the co-parenting class and the six-month follow up. See figure 25.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to longitudinally assess for potential changes in divorcing parents' reconciliation beliefs and interest to attend a reconciliation service. The findings from this study provide support that reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending a reconciliation service may fluctuate even after filing for divorce. Within this sample, only 36.2% of the sample reported no reconciliation beliefs across all three waves of data collection. Additionally, only 20.3% of the sample reported no interest in attending a reconciliation service across all three waves of data. These findings indicate that nearly two out of every three divorcing individuals within this sample reported reconciliation beliefs at some point during data collection. Likewise, approximately 80% of the sample at some point indicated an interest to attend a reconciliation based service.

Consistent with previous research, participants' report of divorce initiation status was negatively associated with reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending a reconciliation service (Doherty et al., 2012). However, both the reconciliation belief and interest in

attending a reconciliation piecewise regression models found a significant interaction between divorce initiation status and the regression assessing reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending a reconciliation service between the pre-test and after attending the co-parenting class. Indicating that divorce initiating participants had a significant increase in reconciliation beliefs and interest to attend a reconciliation service after attending the co-parenting divorce education class. Such findings provide support for the potential of divorce education programs for influencing perceptions of reconciliation possibility among divorcing parents.

The primary aim of divorce education programs is to reduce the potential negative impacts of divorce on children and limit the conflict between divorcing individuals (LaGraft, Stolz, & Brandon, 2015; Brandon, 2010). Co-parenting classes are required in 46 of the 50 states in the U.S. (Mulroy, Riffe, Brandon, Lo & Vaidyanath, 2013). While reconciliation is not the overarching goal of co-parenting divorce education, this study provides support that divorce education programs hold potential to increase reconciliation beliefs and interest to participate in additional reconciliation based services. Divorce education programs may consider increasing the emphasis of reconciliation as a possibility as part of their curriculum. Furthermore, given that a significant portion of the sample was interested in attending reconciliation services, divorce education programs are in a unique position to provide referrals for additional services that may be instrumental in a couples' decision to divorce.

Being the non-initiating partner for both genders was associated with increased interest in attending a reconciliation service compared to initiating partners. However, male participants reported an increased interest in attending a reconciliation service from time 2 to time 3 regardless of initiation status. By contrast female participants reported a decreased

interest in attending a reconciliation service from time 2 to time 3 regardless of divorce initiation status. Previous literature has highlighted gender differences in how and when men and women mourn the divorce (Baum, 2003). Specifically, women typically mourn the loss of the marriage relationship during the conflictual relationship and men mourn the loss of family roles after the divorce (Baum, 2003). Furthermore, there is support that women are more in tune with the emotional climate and status of the relationship and engage in more therapy seeking behaviors than their male partners do (Bruce & Kim, 1992; Mandell, 1995).

While beyond the scope of this study, it is possible that women may have an active interest in attending a therapeutic service with the hope of reconciling before the divorce is filed for and that men may not be aware of the state of the relationship or motivated to participate in reconciliation services until after one partner has filed for divorce. In other words, there may be a mismatch of the timing when an interest in a reconciliation service occurs and for many men the “wake up call” is not until one of them files for divorce. Such conceptualization of the timing of desired reconciliation services leads one to wonder if for many couples, it is the case where men’s attempts to repair the relationship is often too little too late for their female partner and that she had been previously interested in working on the relationship but that window has closed for her.

Implications for Theory

The majority of previous research examining reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending reconciliation services among divorcing populations have solely utilized attachment theory as a theoretical framework to understand the ambivalence regarding the decision to divorce (see Doherty et al., 2011). With the current study, attachment theory

provides valued insight on why reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending reconciliation services may fluctuate overtime, even after the couple has filed for divorce. While attachment theory may be useful in identifying why individuals are reluctant to separate from attachment figures in their life, even in conflictual a marriage it may not capture all the nuances of the difficult decision to divorce. In a review of relational decision-making theories, Allen and Hawkins identified that social exchange theory (Charvoz, Bodenmann, Bertoni, Lafrate, & Giuliana, 2008), risk and resilience (Few & Rosen, 2005), feminism (Hewitt, Western, & Baxter, 2006), and narrative theories (Kanewischer & Harris, 2015) have also been used to explain decisions to stay or leave relationships. The results of the present study may also be interpreted from a Bowen family systems perspective. Specifically, the Bowen family system concept of differentiation (Bowen, 1976) holds potential to help explain why some divorcing individuals may experience stability regarding their decision to divorce across the divorce process. For example, the divorce initiating partner may be approaching the decision to divorce from a place of security and solid sense-of-self.

Future Research

One of the major findings from the present study is that nearly two-thirds of participants reported reconciliation beliefs at some point during data collection and that only 20% of participants declined interest in attending a reconciliation service across each wave. Future research could examine what factors account for differences among divorcing individuals who reported no reconciliation beliefs or interest to attend a reconciliation and those individuals who are reporting beliefs or reconciliation or interest in attending a reconciliation service.

Additionally, this study examined reconciliation beliefs and interest to attend a reconciliation service longitudinally. Future research could examine couples' reconciliation beliefs and interest to attend a reconciliation service longitudinally. Utilizing, dyadic analysis methods could help identify the extent that divorcing couples have reconciliation beliefs at the same time and assess for the influence of partner characteristics on participants' reports of reconciliation beliefs and interest to attend a reconciliation service.

Finally, it remains unknown how reconciliation beliefs and interest to attend a reconciliation service change overtime and if the CPR class is instrumental in that change. Future research could examine differences in reconciliation beliefs comparing participants who went through a divorce education program and a control group of divorced individuals who did not participate in a divorce education program.

Limitations

While the present study makes substantial contributions in the study of reconciliation among divorcing couples it is not without limitations. The most substantial limitation is the nature in which reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending a reconciliation service were measured. Variables were single items measured on a three point Likert-type scale. As such, it is likely that the items are not capturing all the nuances associated with reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending. Furthermore, being measured on a three point Likert scale significantly reduces the variance. Additionally, there are many other factors that could influence reconciliation beliefs aside from gender and divorce initiation status.

Similarly, the variable examining divorce initiation status was worded "*did you initiate the divorce*" and response options included "yes" or "no." It is unclear as to what

participants' interpretation of initiation includes. For example, for some participants may believe that initiation refers to the first person who discussed divorce or it could refer to the individual who legally filed for divorce. Additionally, the response options for initiation status do not account for couples where a the decision to divorce was mutual.

Participants' report of reconciliation beliefs and interest in attending a reconciliation service were assessed at three time points. Time 1 was assessed while participants registered for the Co-parenting for Resilience divorce education class. The time between registering for the class and actually attending class potentially varies quite a bit among participants. Some participants may have registered for the class several weeks in advance, while others could have registered the same day as taking this class. Likewise, time 3 was collected 6-12 months following their attendance in the CPR class. As such, one of the limitations of the variables are that they were not uniformly collected in regards to space between registration, attending the CPR class, and follow-up.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB approval



Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: 02/09/2018
Application Number: HS-18-4
Proposal Title: Oklahoma Cooperative Extension: Co-Parenting for Resilience

Principal Investigator: R COX
Co-Investigator(s): MATT BROSI
Faculty Adviser:
Project Coordinator: KATEY MASRI
Research Assistant(s):

Processed as: Expedited

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Approval Date: 02/09/2018

Expiration Date: 02/08/2019

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

The final versions of any recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are available for download from IRBManager. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be approved by the IRB. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, adviser, other research personnel, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any unanticipated and/or adverse events to the IRB Office promptly.
4. Notify the IRB office when your research project is complete or when you are no longer affiliated with Oklahoma State University.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact the IRB Office at 223 Scott Hall (phone: 405-744-3377, irb@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hugh Crethar'.

Hugh Crethar, Chair Institutional
Review Board

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics

	Percent	Number of participants
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	77.6	1,667
Native American	8.4	181
Latino	6.3	136
African-American	4.0	87
Asian	1.6	35
Mixed	2.0	43
Education		
Some primary school	4.3	94
Graduated high school	27.4	593
Attended some college or technical school	32.1	695
Completed technical school	6.1	132
Completed bachelors degree	23.9	518
Completed masters degree	4.7	102
Completed doctoral or professional degree	1.2	27

Table 2 Results of the reconciliation beliefs multi-level model

<i>Table 2: MLM of Reconciliation Service</i>			
Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>
Differences in raising kids	18.29	47.42	.39
Substance use	6.41	51.89	.12
	-		
Physical abuse	103.92	72.10	-1.44
Emotional abuse	97.53	48.77	2.00
Involvement in crime	-.05	.21	-.25
Sexual abuse	-18.30	70.85	-.26
Sex	100.78	83.20	1.21
	-		
Divorce initiation status	616.01	.10	-.233

Table 3. Results of the reconciliation service multi-level model

<i>Table 3: MLM of Reconciliation Beliefs</i>			
Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>
Differences in raising kids	-29.82	40.43	-.74
Substance use	-15.53	44.38	-.35
Physical abuse	-22.89	61.28	-.37
Emotional abuse	61.53	41.63	1.48
Involvement in crime	-.02	.17	-.10
Sexual abuse	6.71	60.43	.11
Sex	-49.82	69.78	-.71
Divorce initiation status	-.02	.09	-.25

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .0001$

Table 4. *Piecewise Regression Reconciliation beliefs (N=376)*

-	<u>Model 1</u>				<u>Model 2</u>				<u>Model 3</u>			
Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>	
Time1 – Time2	.03	.07	.36		.03	.11	.23		-.09	.16	-1.29	
Time2 – Time3	.52	.07	7.42	***	.53	.11	4.82	***	.57	.15	3.77	***
Sex					.08	.23	.37		-.09	.23	-.38	
Sex x time1-time2					.01	.14	-.05		.06	.15	.41	
Sex x time1-time2					.00	.14	-.00		.30	.15	2.01	
Initiate									-.71	.15	-1.29	**
Initiate x time1-time2									.30	.15	2.01	*
Initiate x time1-time2									-.06	.15	-.41	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .0001$

Table 5. *Piecewise Regression Reconciliation Service (N=376)*

Variable	<u>Model 1</u>			<u>Model 2</u>			<u>Model 3</u>		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>
Time1 – Time2	.12	.06	1.93	.20	.10	2.04 *	-.09	.13	-.70
Time2 – Time3	-.03	.07	7.42	-.21	.10	-2.09 *	-.23	.14	3.77
Sex				.23	.20	1.15	.01	.20	.07
Sex x time1-time2				-.13	.12	-1.06	-.04	.13	-.33
Sex x time1-time2				.31	.13	2.42 *	.33	.13	2.51 *
Initiate							-.86	.20	-4.26 ***
Initiate x time1-time2							.37	.13	2.92 *
Initiate x time1-time2							.04	.13	.33

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Figure 1: Chi-square between divorce initiation status and gender.

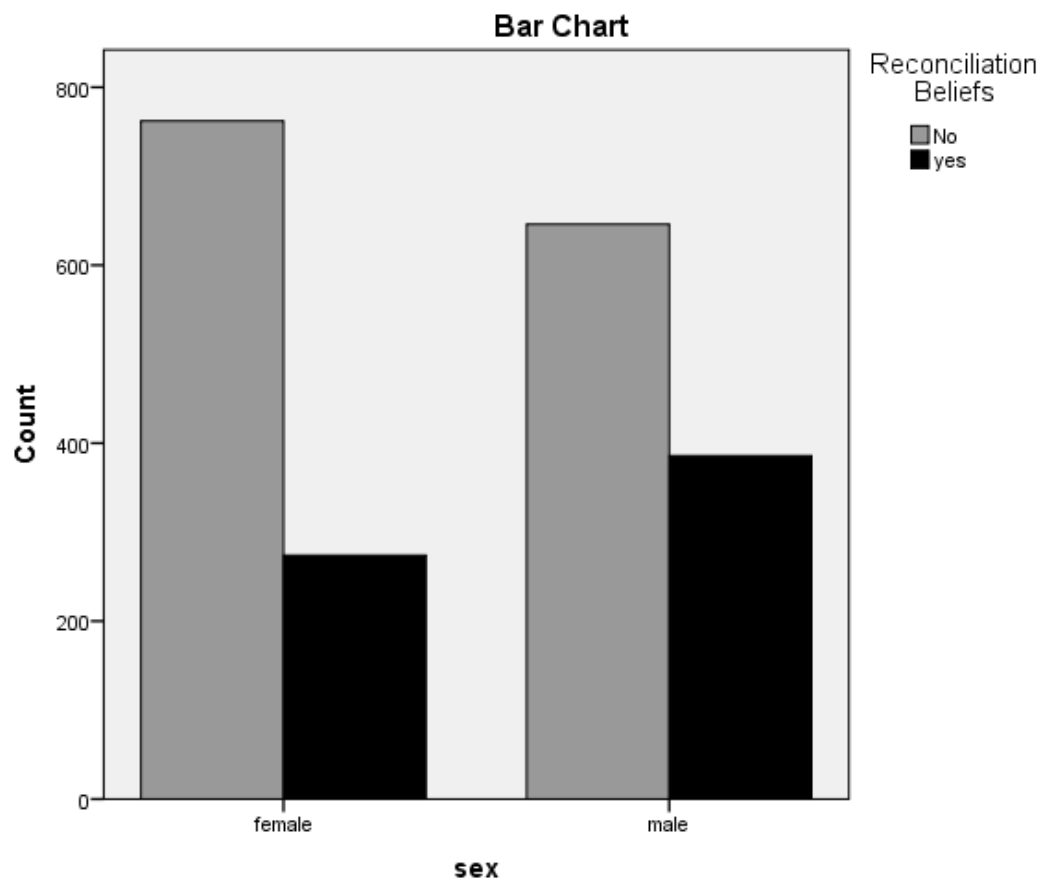


Figure 2: Chi-square between gender and reconciliation beliefs

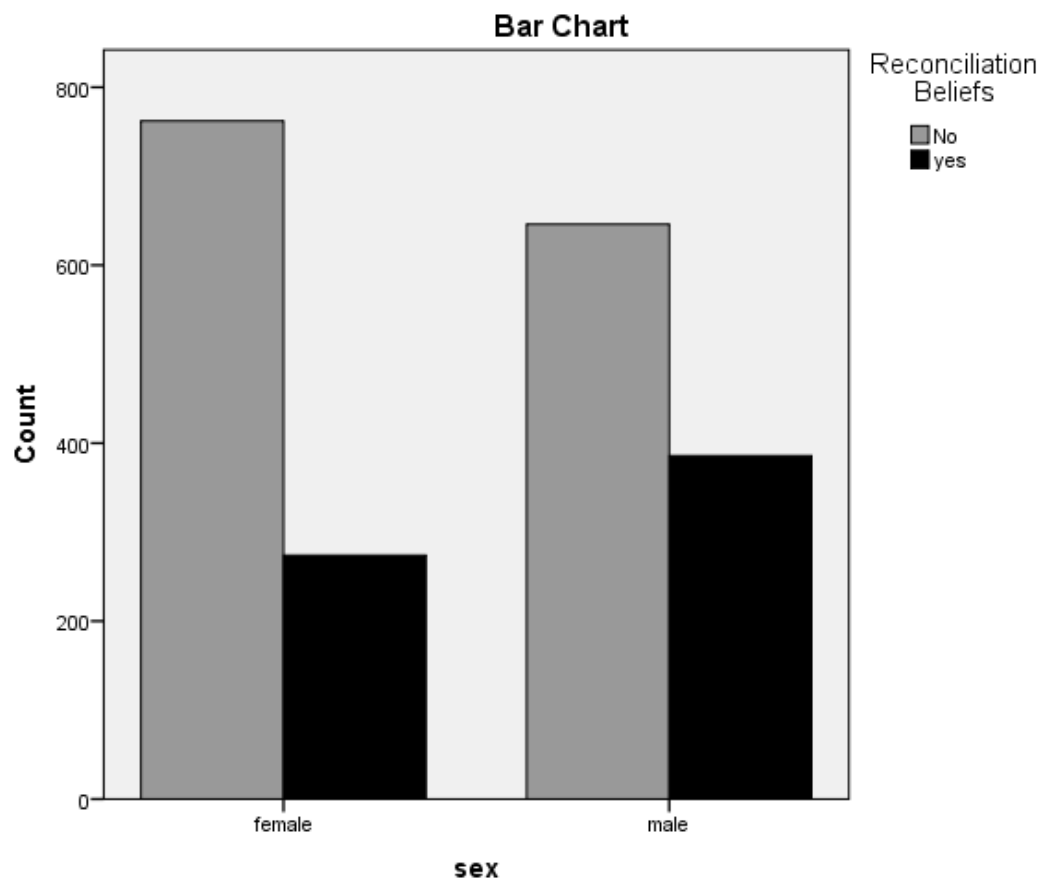


Figure 3: Chi-square between reconciliation service and gender

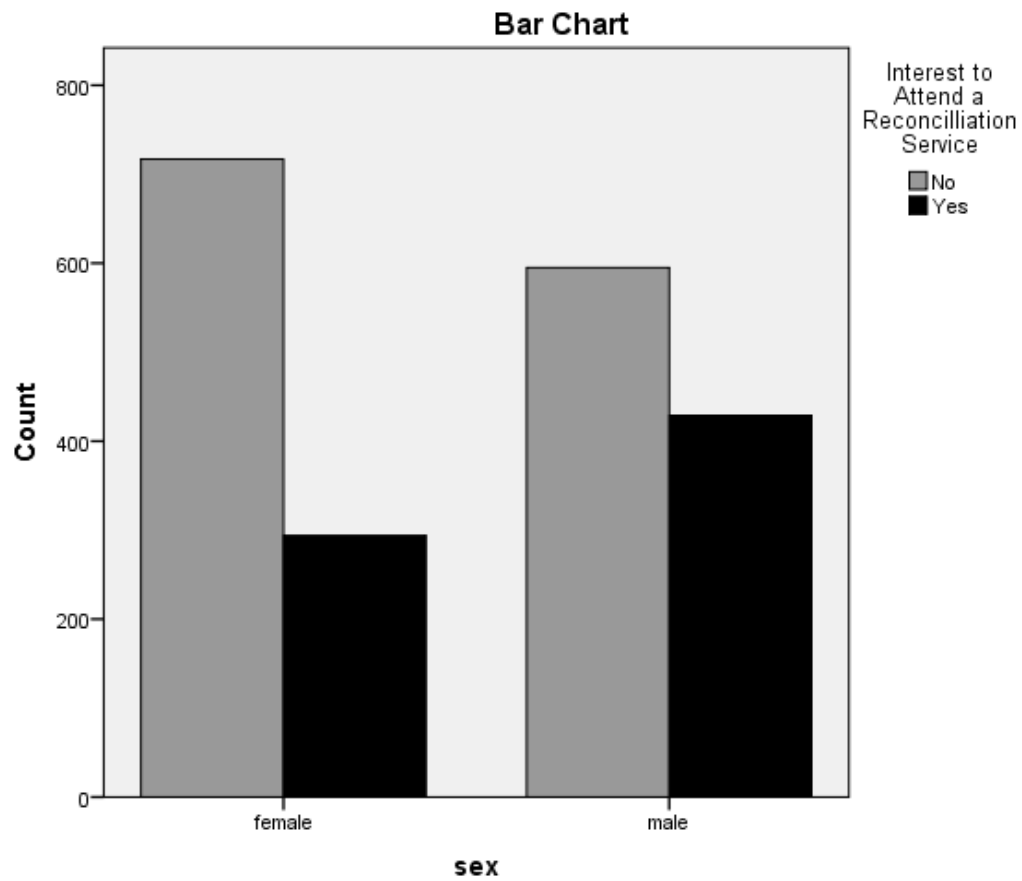


Figure 4: Female MANOVA between reconciliation belief groups and differences in raising children.

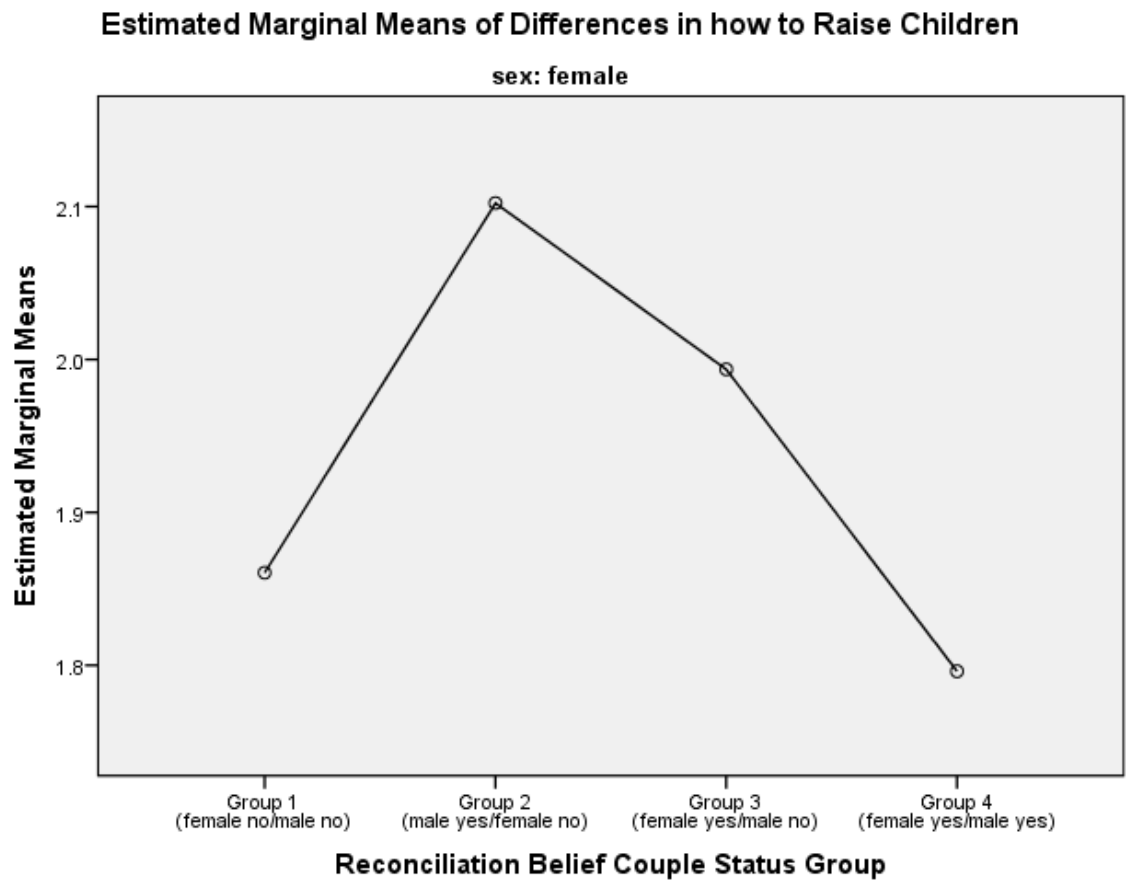


Figure 5: Female MANOVA between reconciliation belief groups and substance abuse.

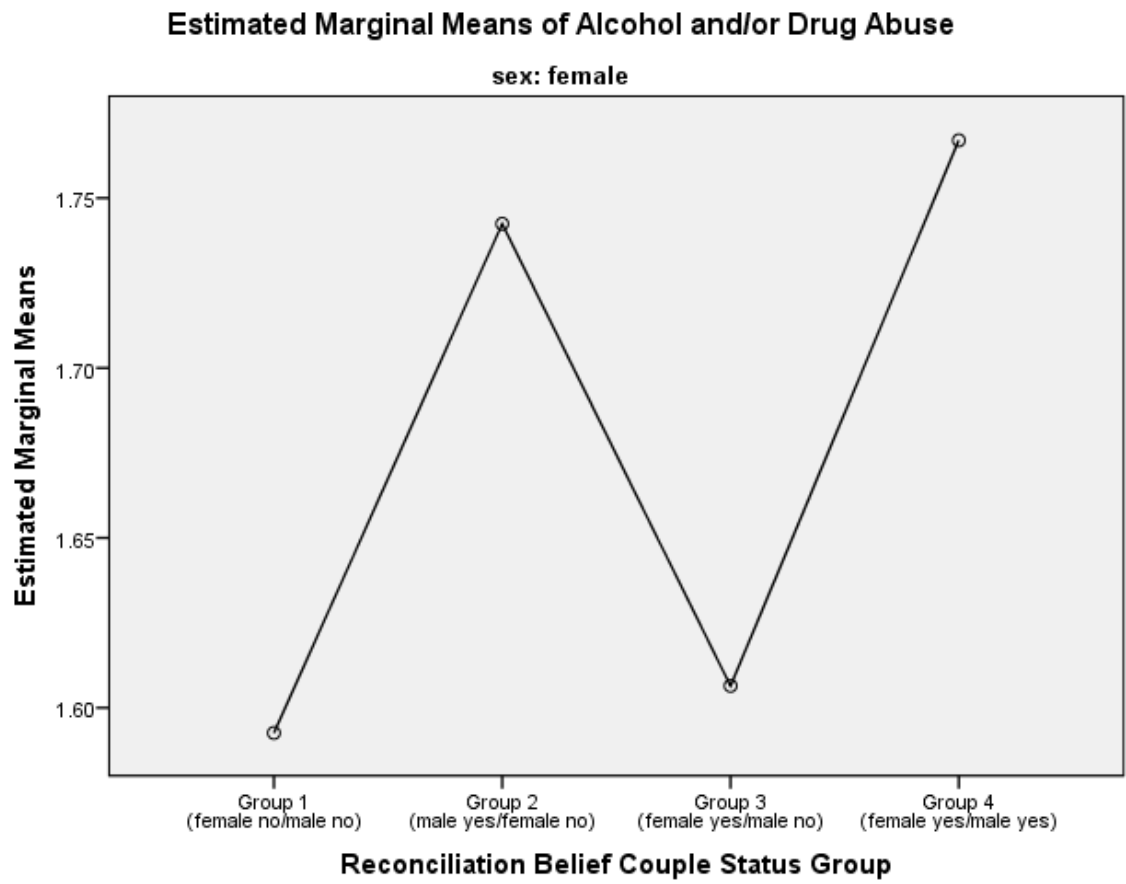


Figure 6: Female MANOVA between reconciliation belief groups and physical violence .

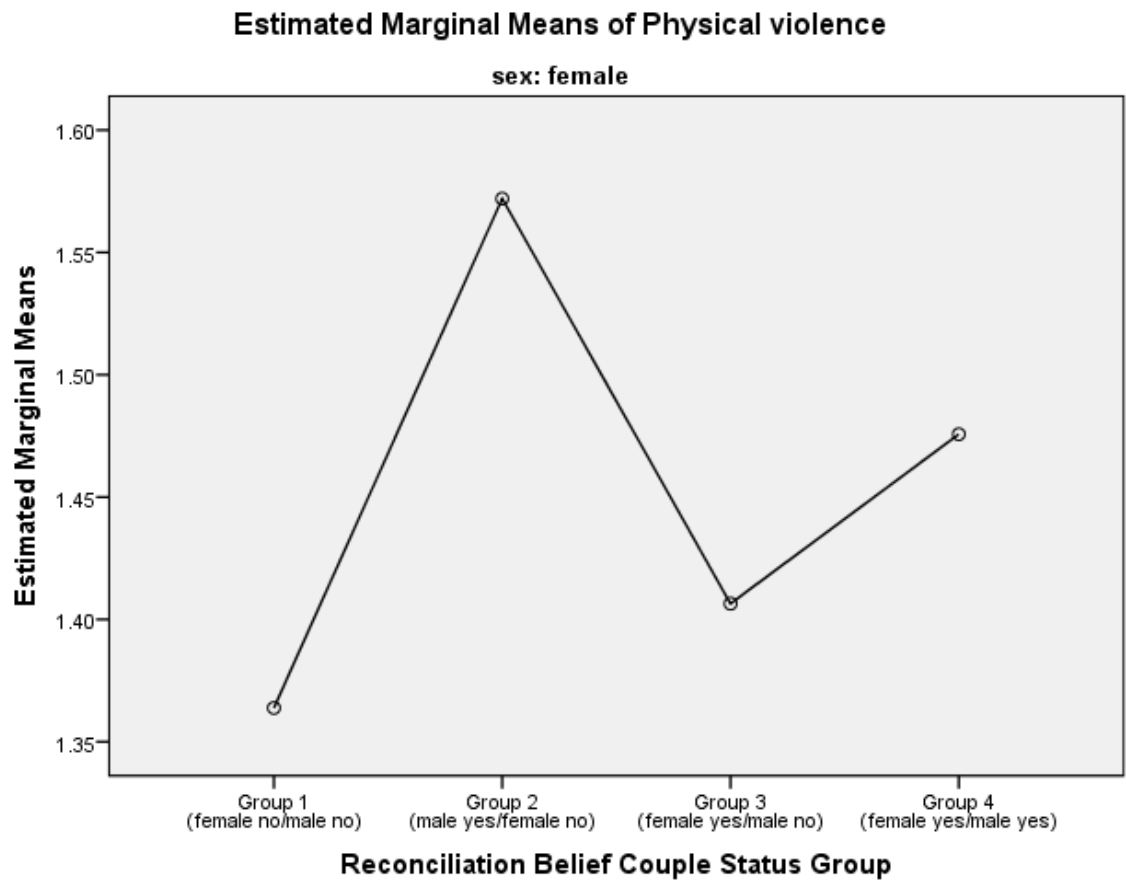


Figure 7: Female MANOVA between reconciliation belief groups and emotional abuse.

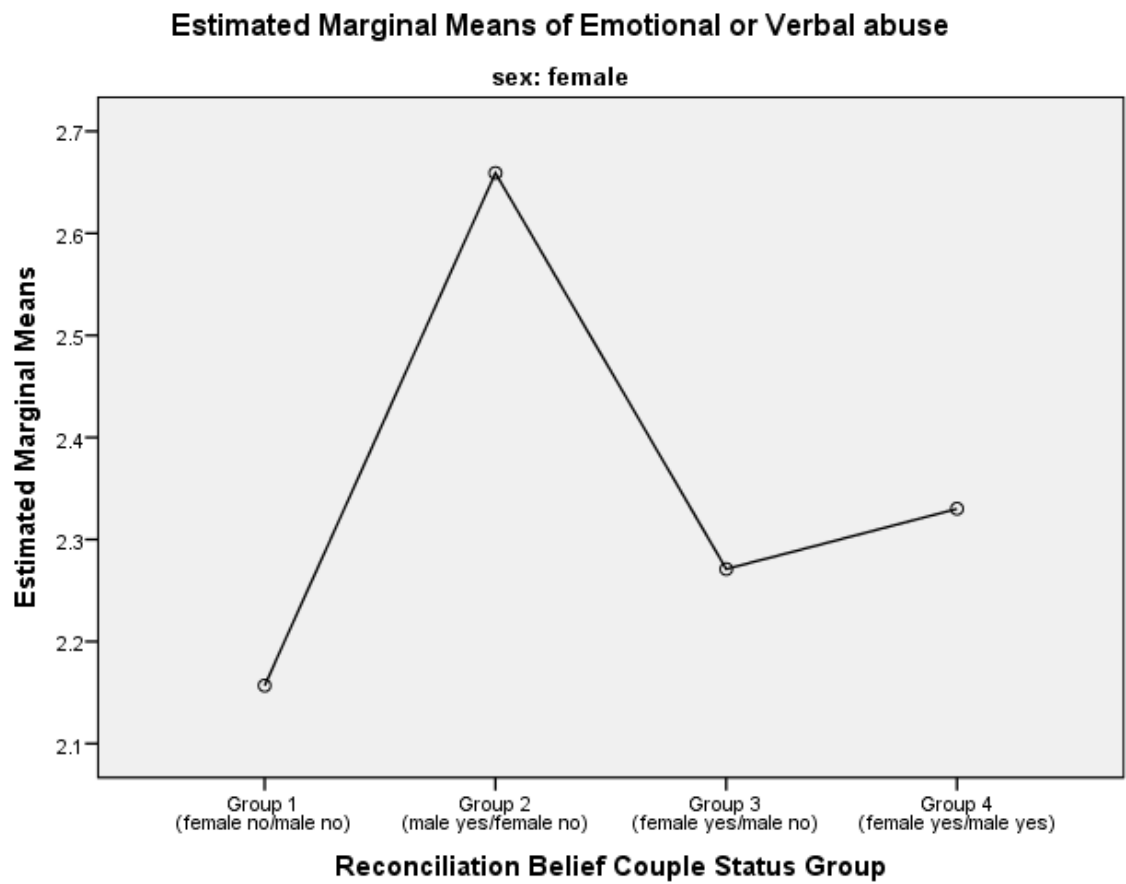


Figure 8: Female MANOVA between reconciliation belief groups and involvement in criminal activity.

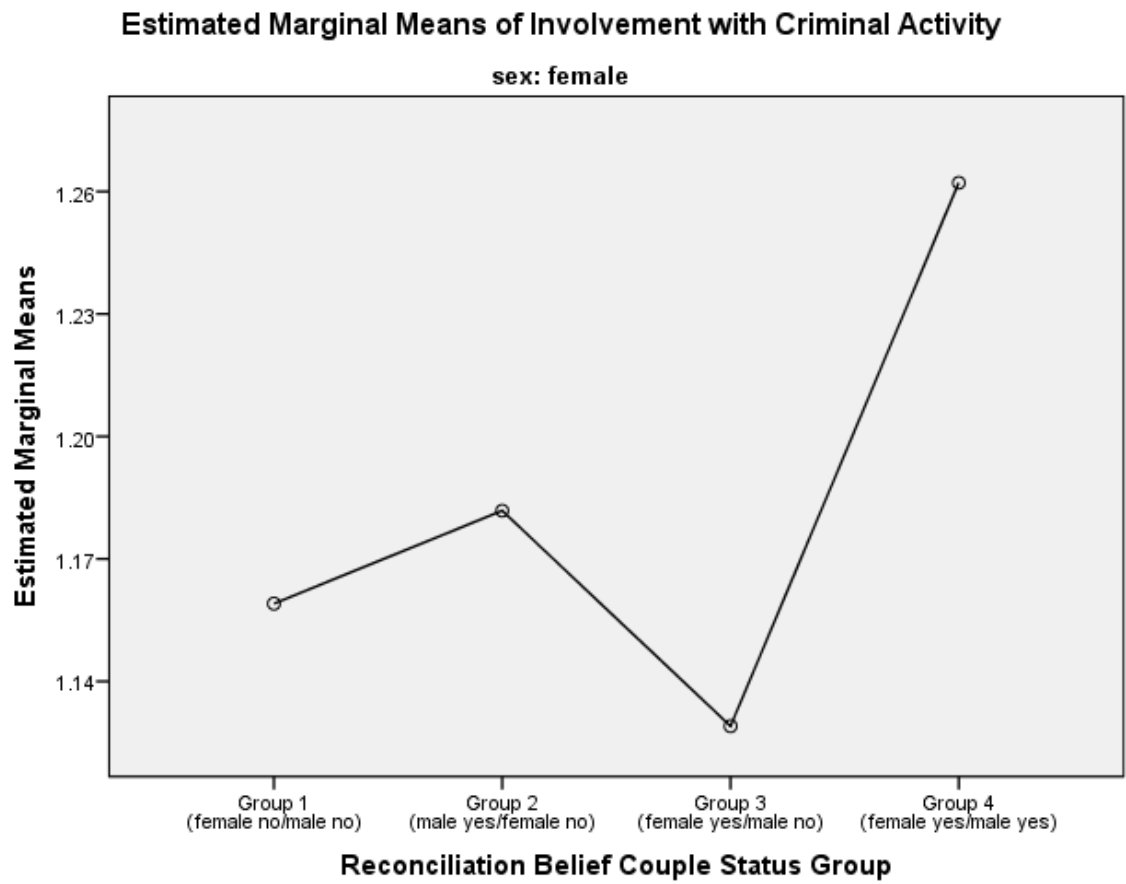


Figure 9: Female MANOVA between reconciliation belief groups and sex abuse.

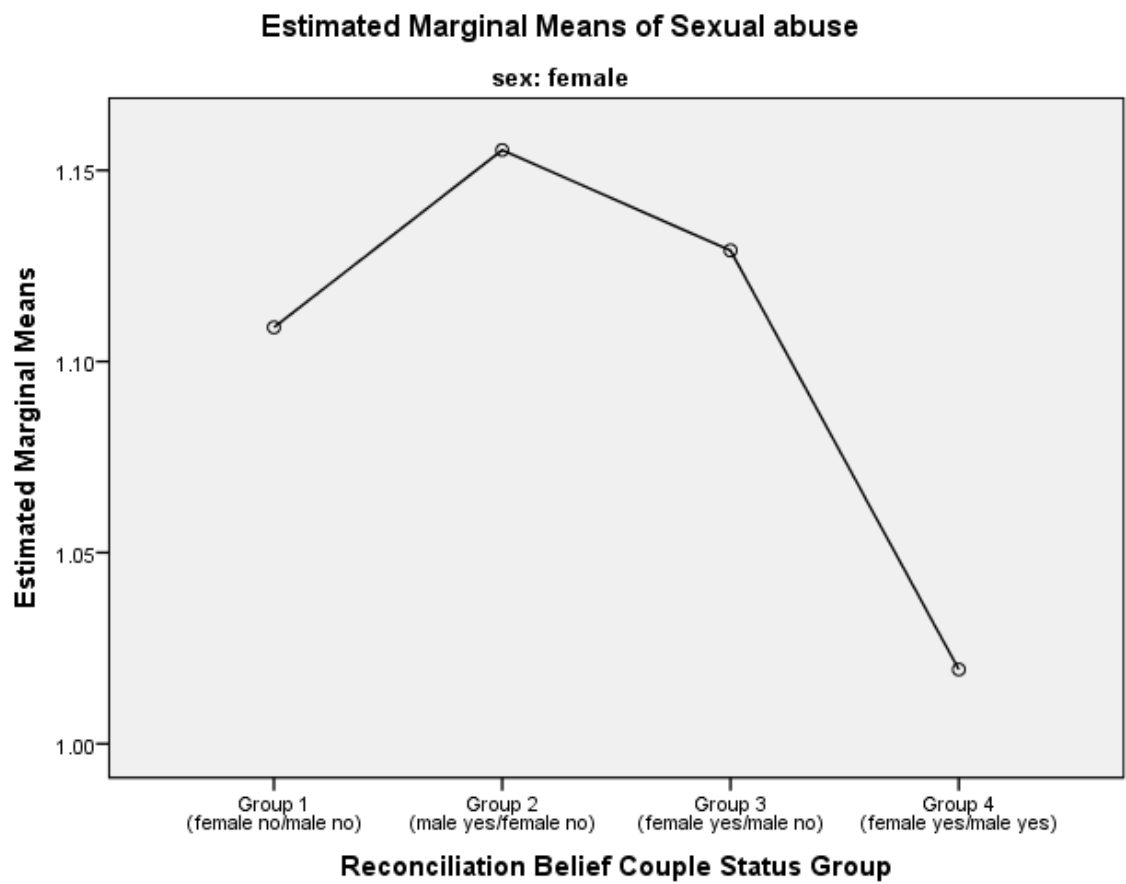


Figure 10: Male MANOVA between reconciliation belief groups and differences in raising children.

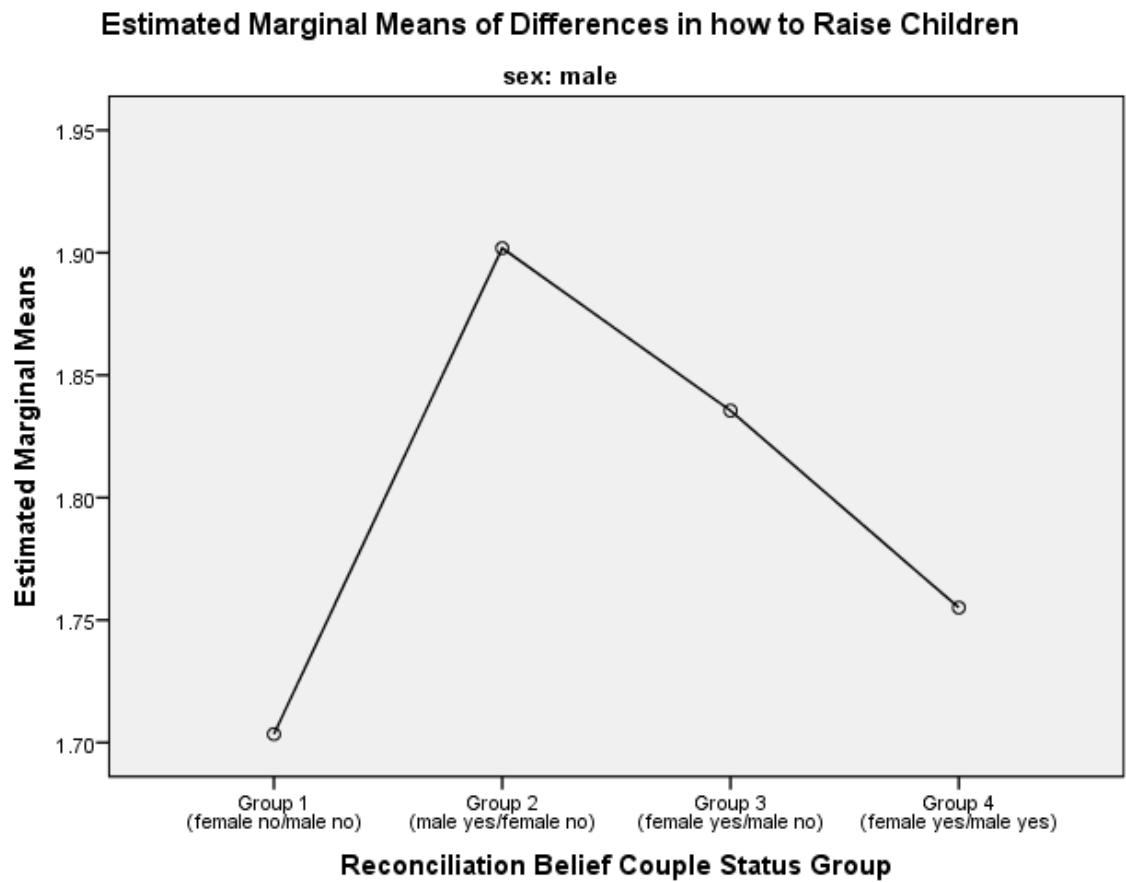


Figure 11: Male MANOVA between reconciliation belief groups and physical violence.

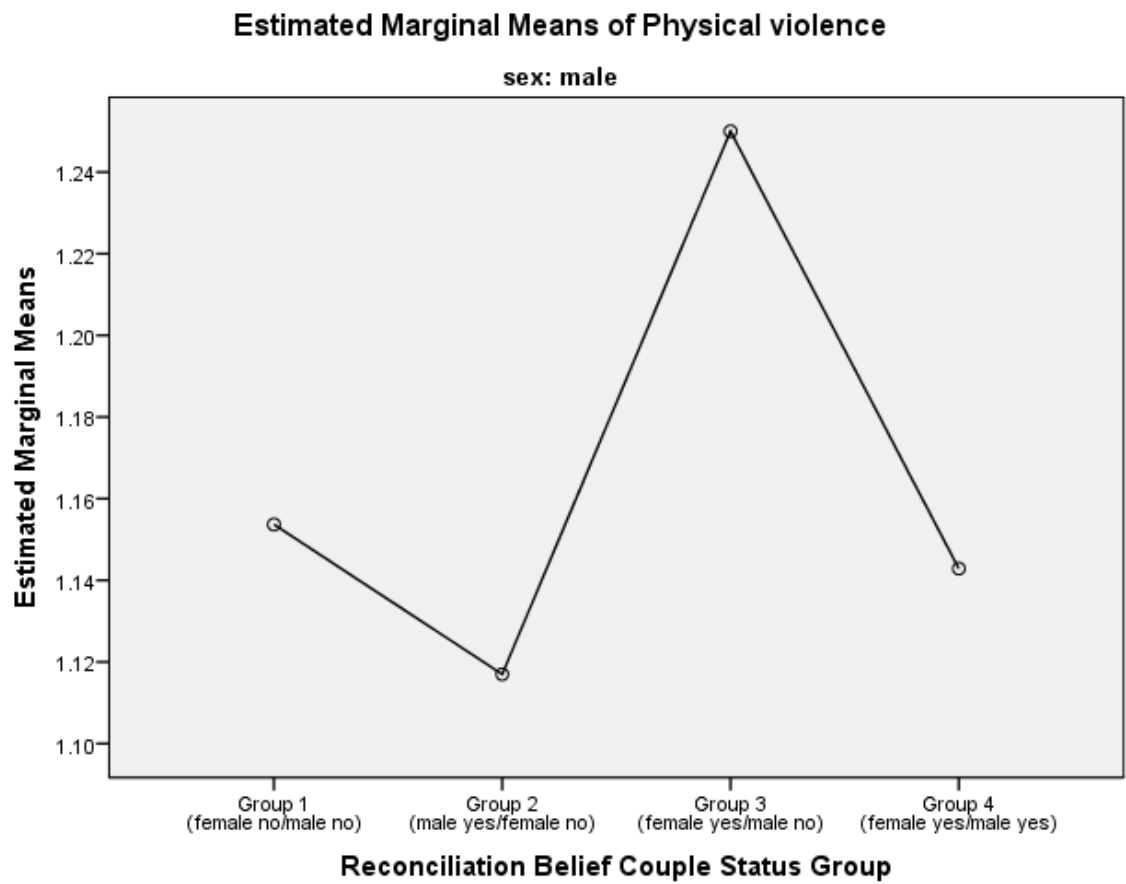


Figure 12: Male MANOVA between reconciliation belief groups and emotional abuse.

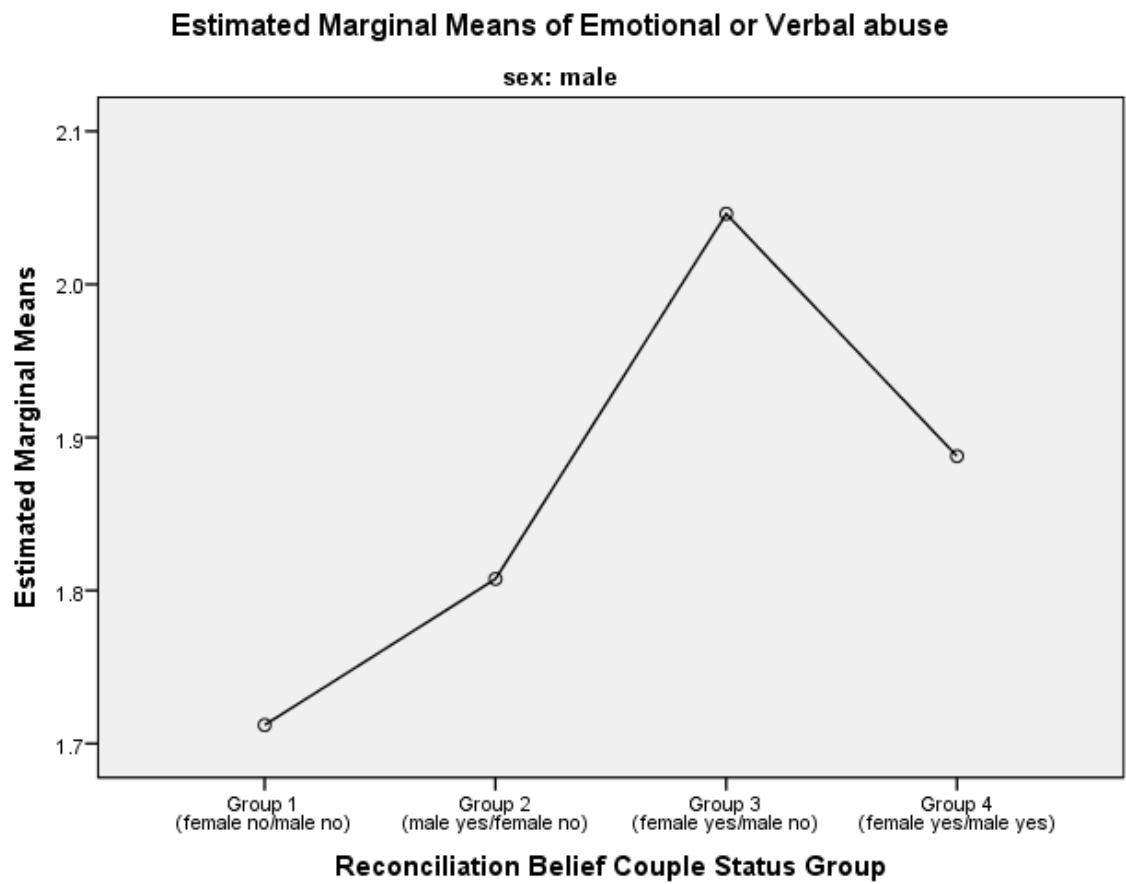


Figure 13: Male MANOVA between reconciliation belief groups and substance abuse.

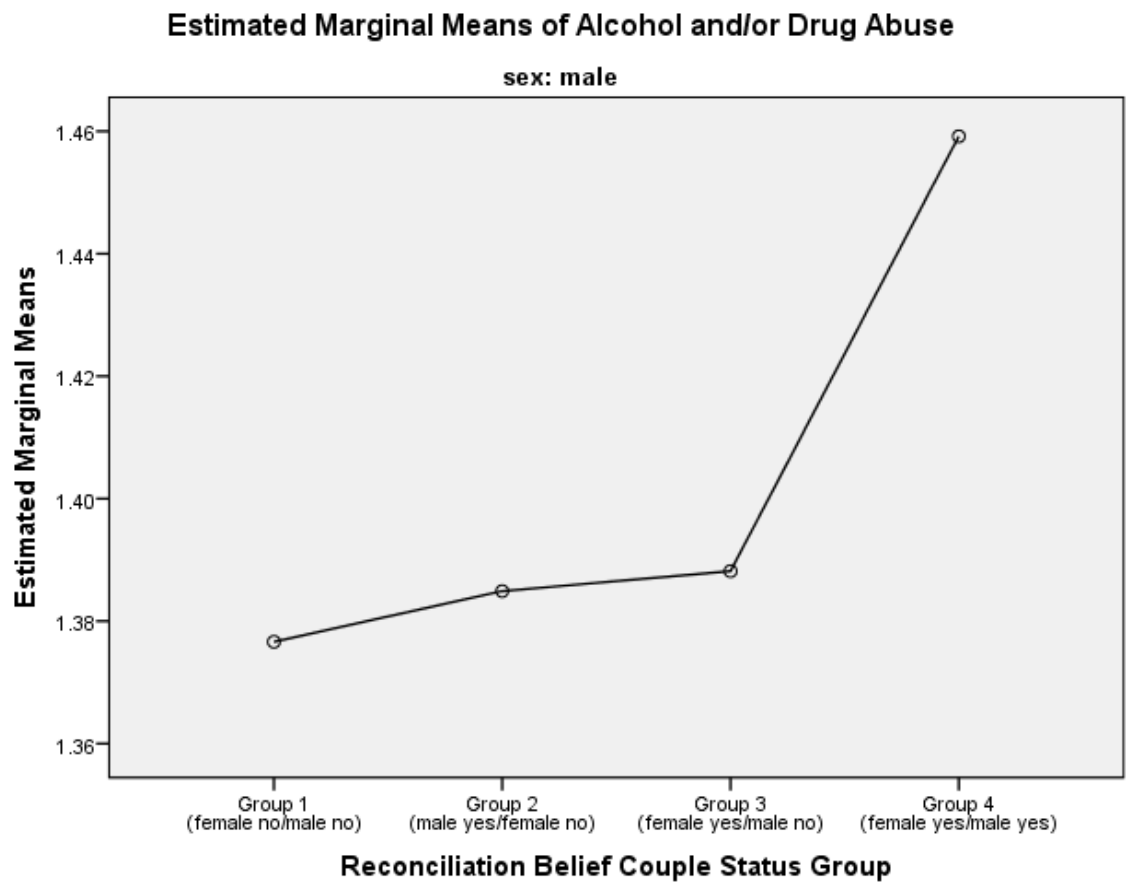


Figure 14: Male MANOVA between reconciliation belief groups and involvement in criminal activity.

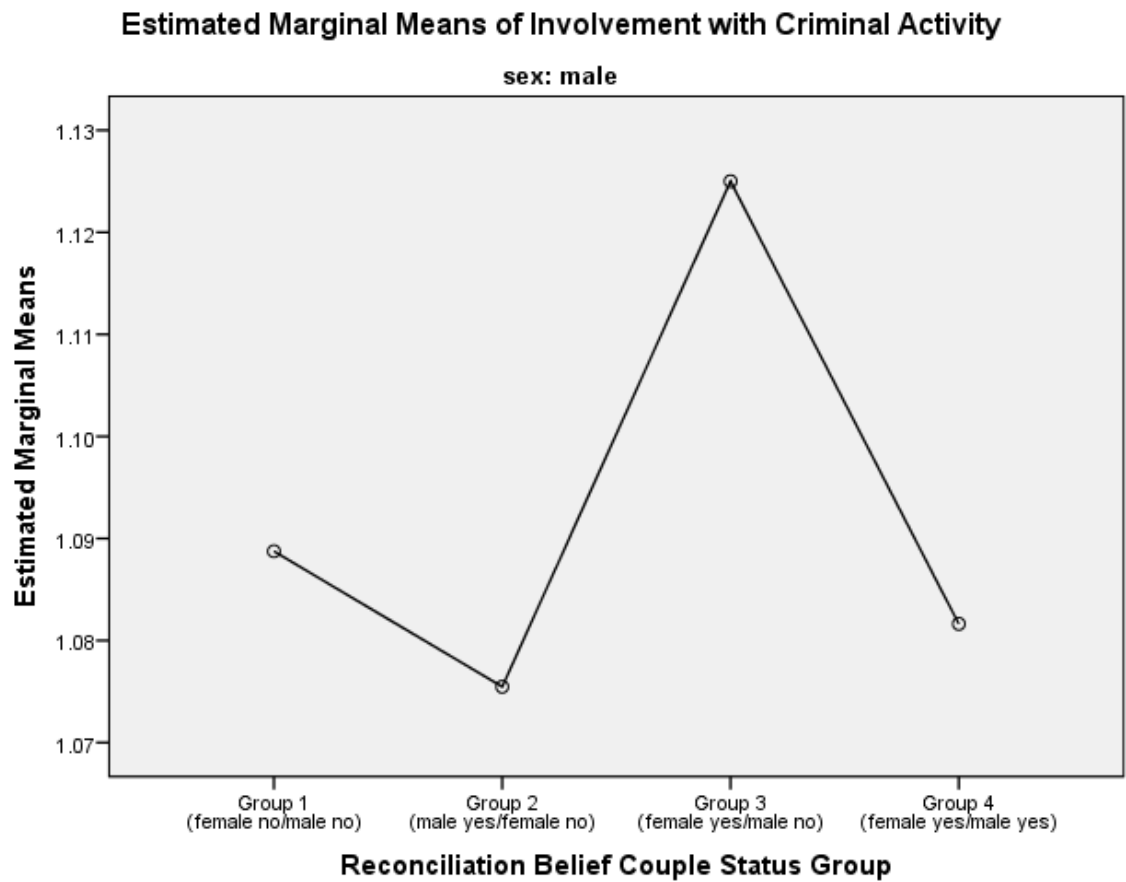


Figure 15: Male MANOVA between reconciliation belief groups and sex abuse.

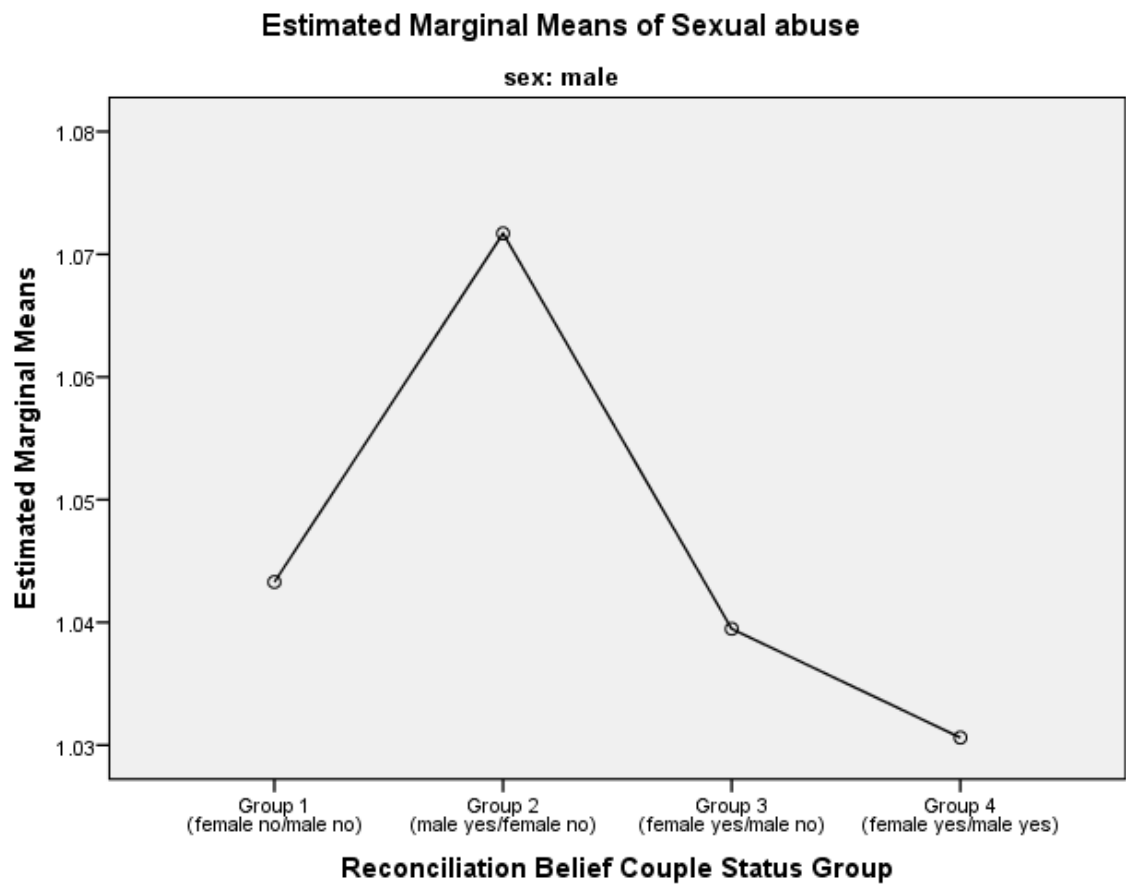


Figure 16: Female MANOVA between reconciliation service groups and differences in raising children.

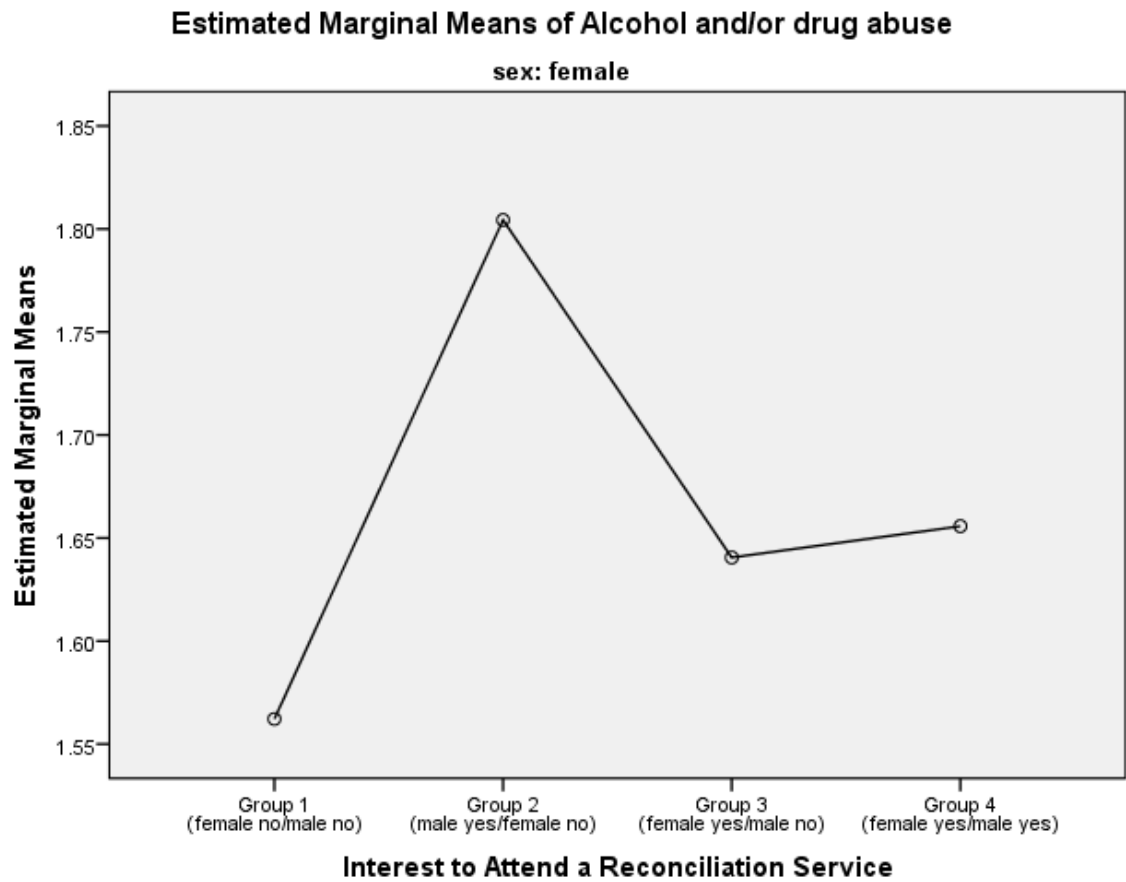


Figure 17: Female MANOVA between reconciliation service groups and differences in raising children.

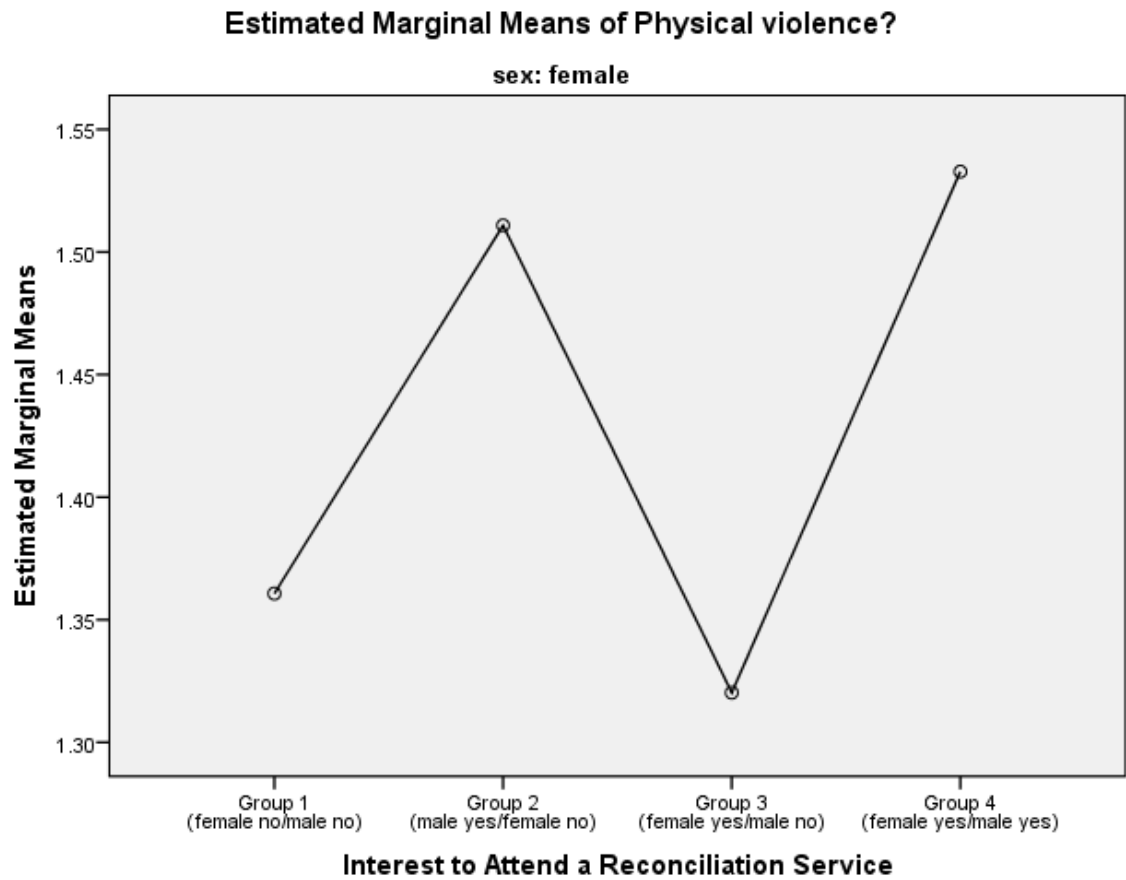


Figure 18: Female MANOVA between reconciliation service groups and emotional abuse.

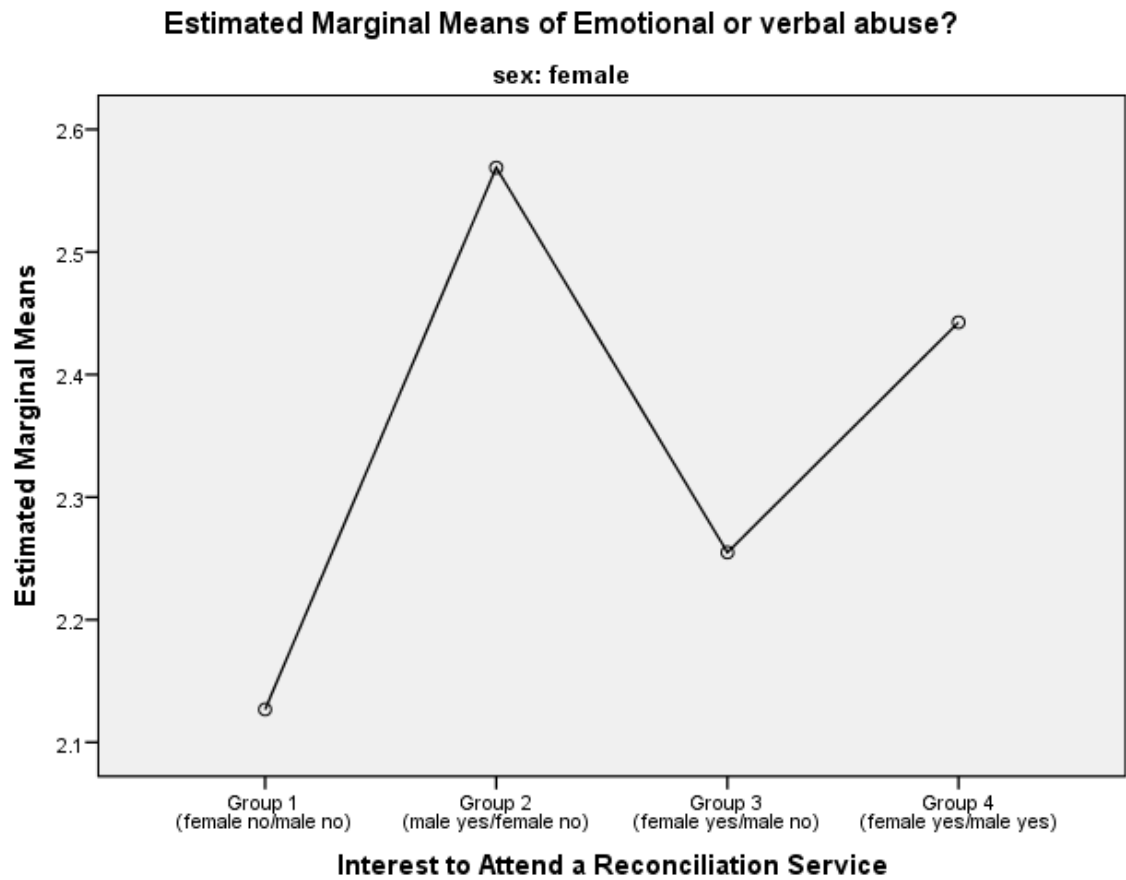


Figure 19: Female MANOVA between reconciliation service groups and criminal activity.

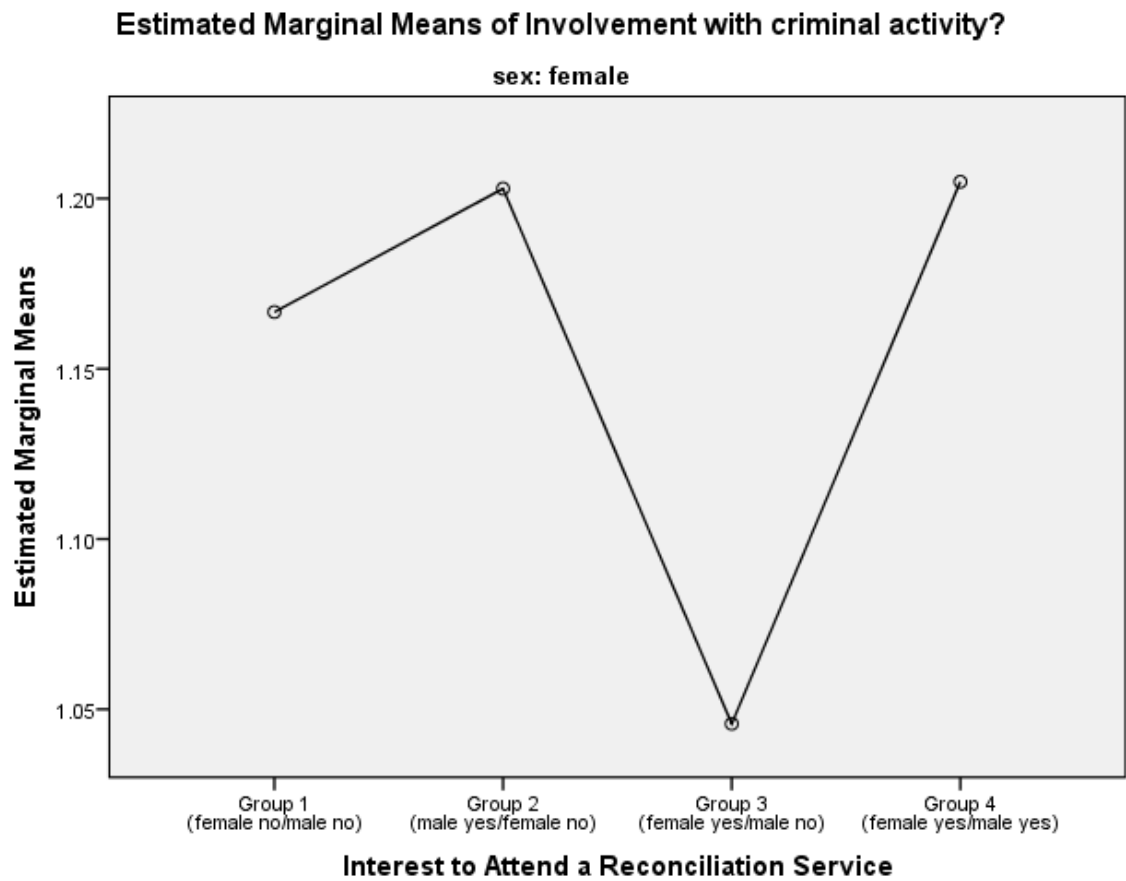


Figure 20: Female MANOVA between reconciliation service groups and sexual abuse.

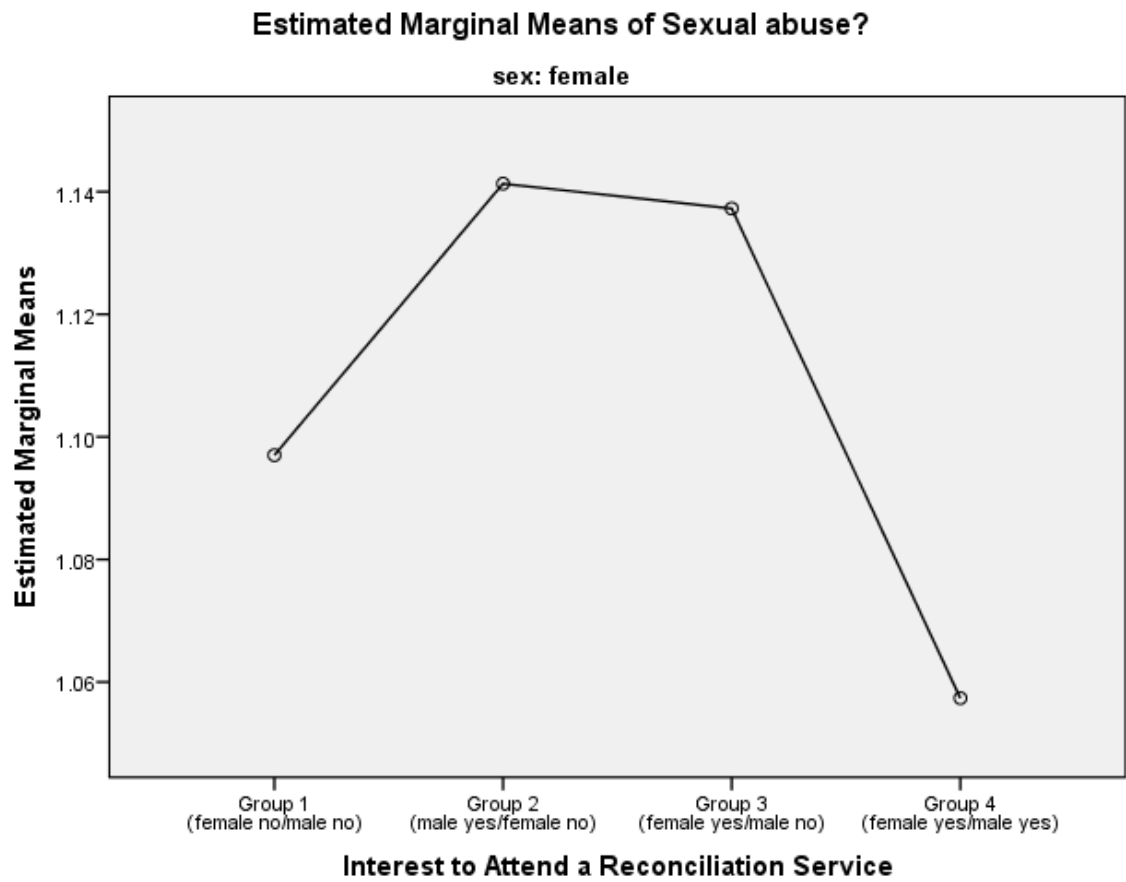


Figure 21: Male MANOVA between reconciliation service groups and sexual abuse.

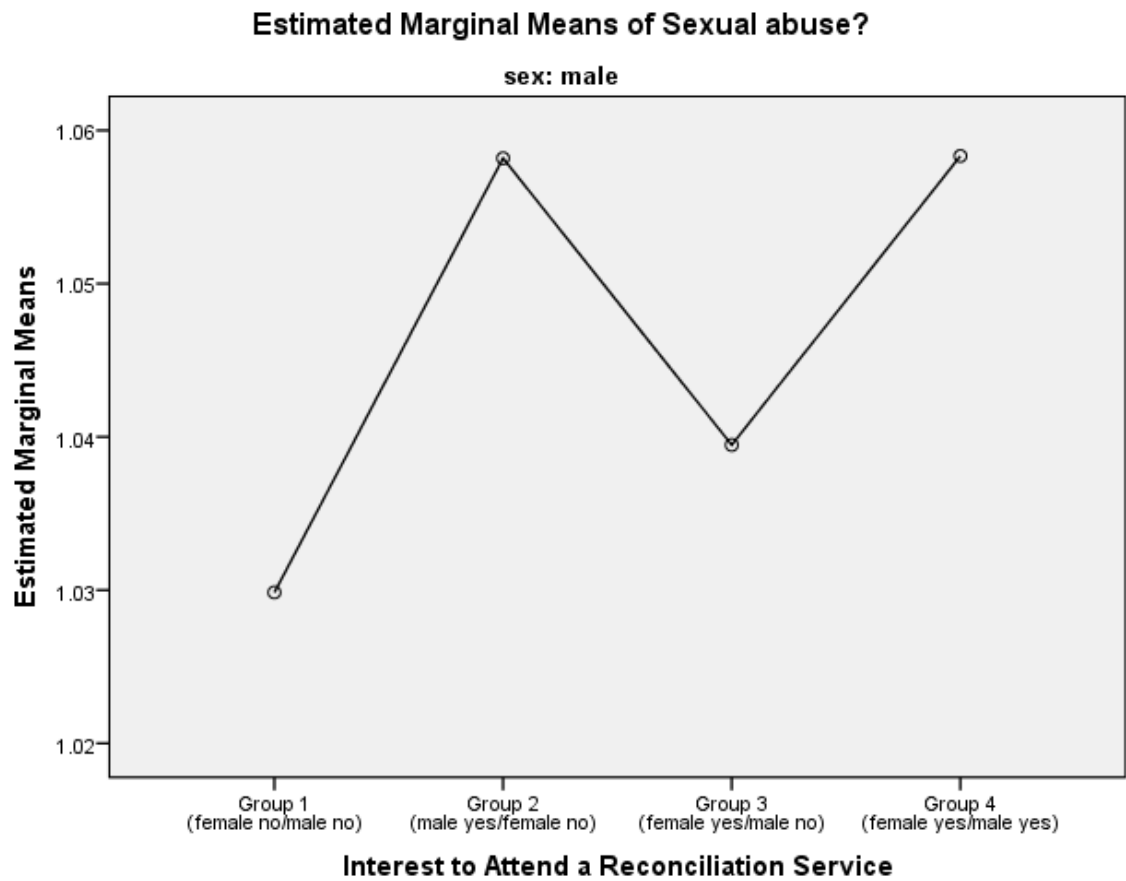


Figure 22: Male MANOVA between reconciliation service groups and emotion abuse.

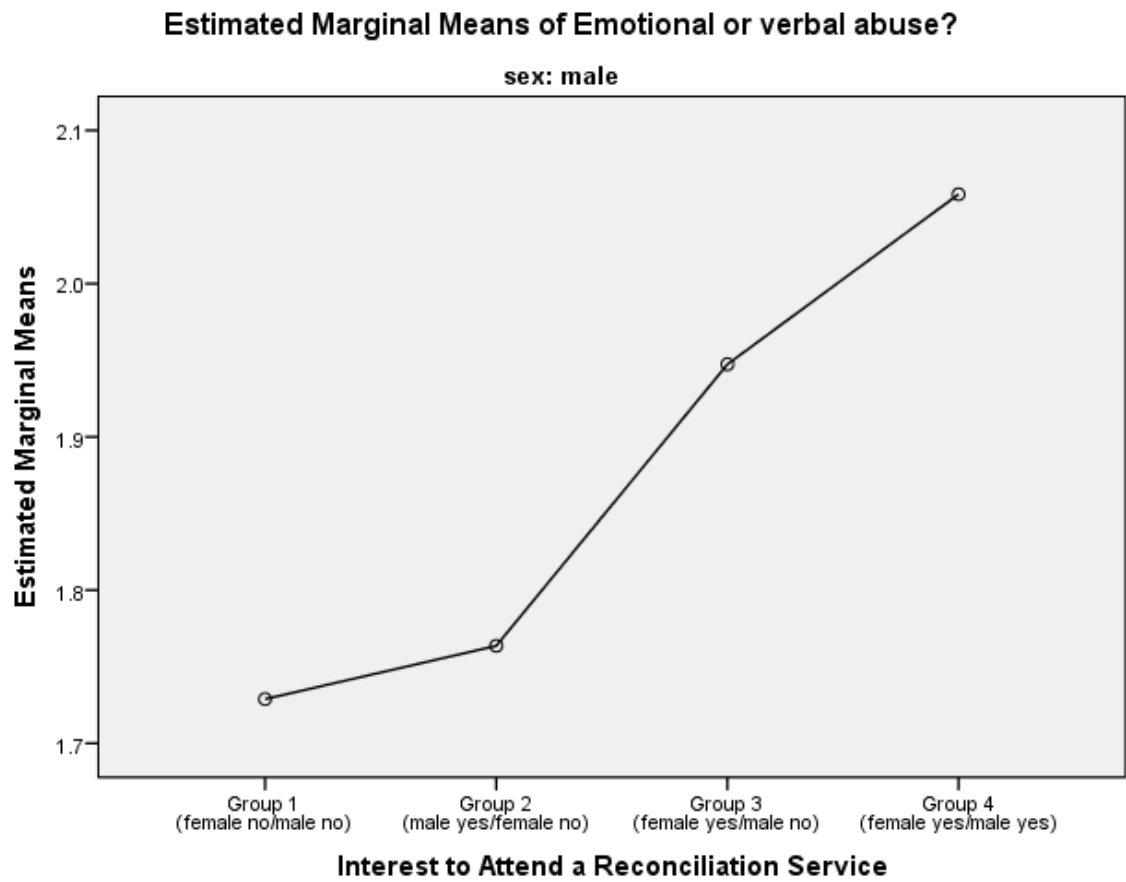


Figure 23: Male MANOVA between reconciliation service groups and physical abuse.

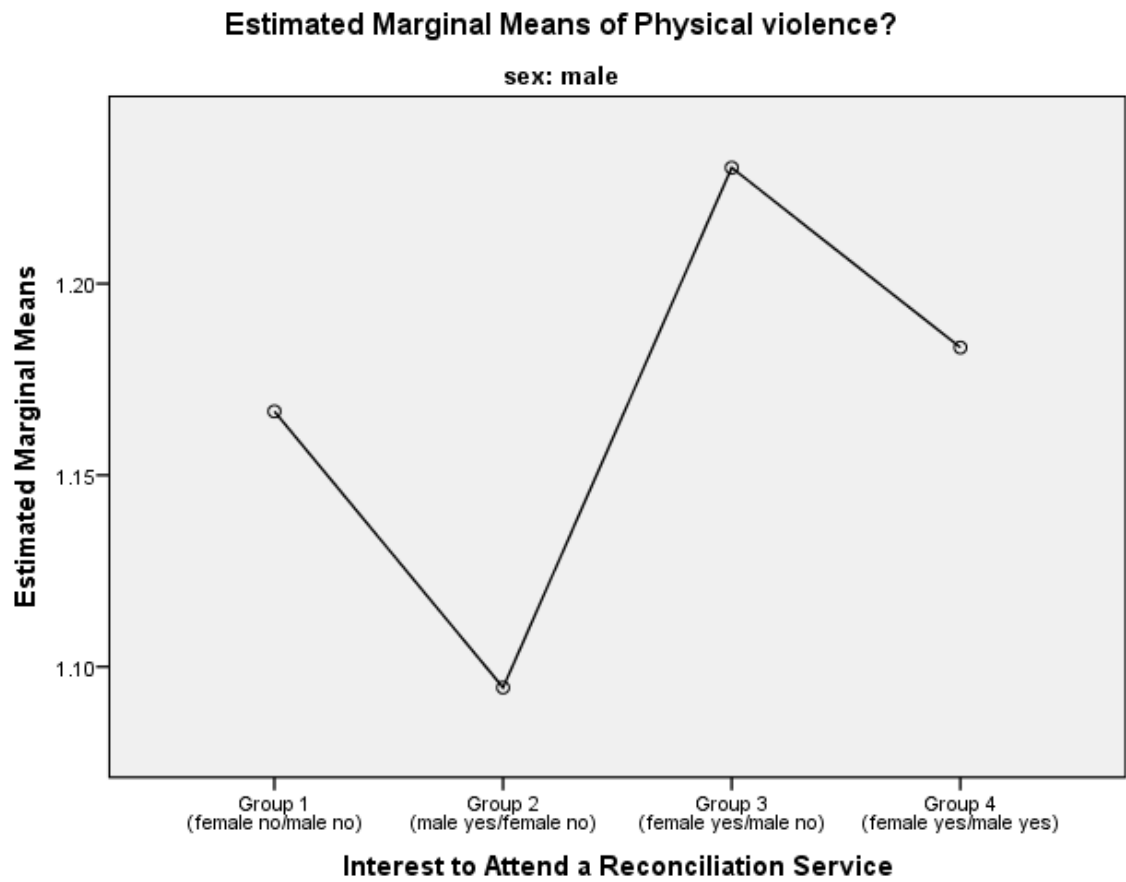


Figure 24: Male MANOVA between reconciliation service groups and differences in raising children.

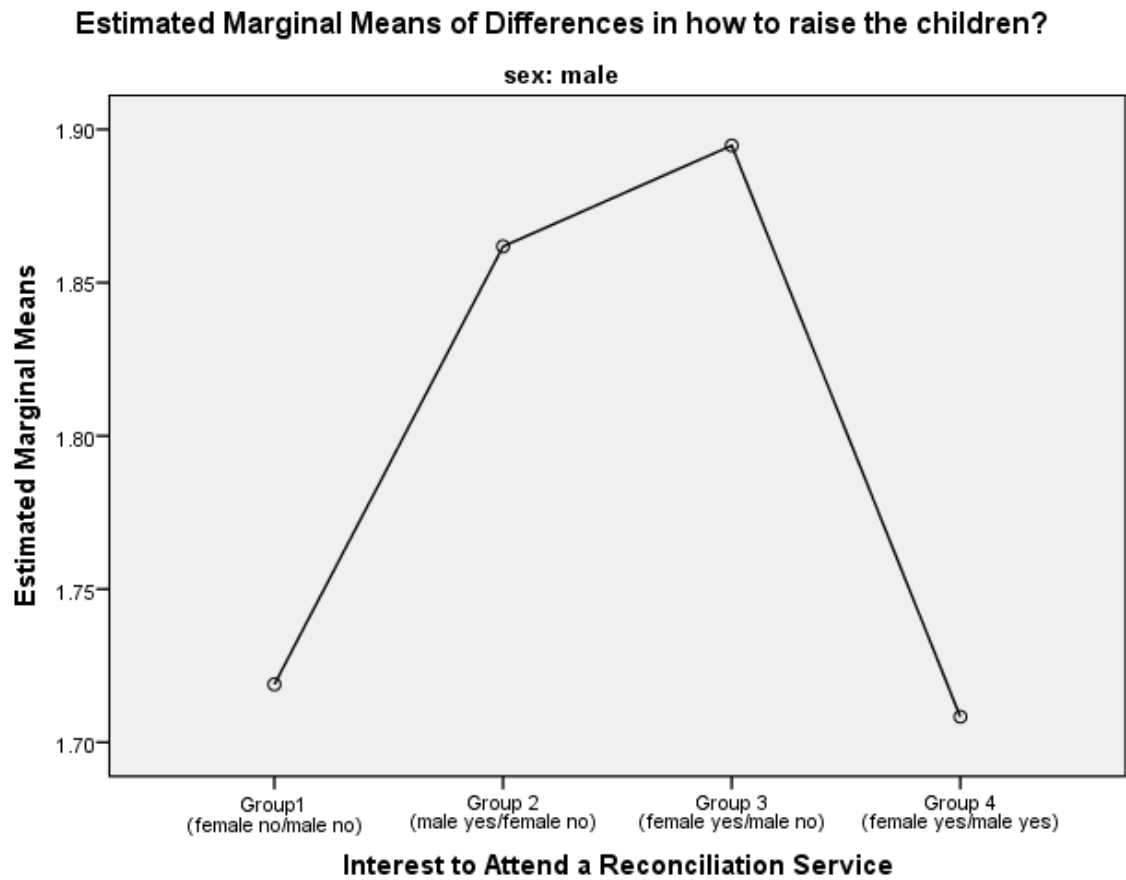


Figure 25: Male MANOVA between reconciliation service groups and criminal activity.

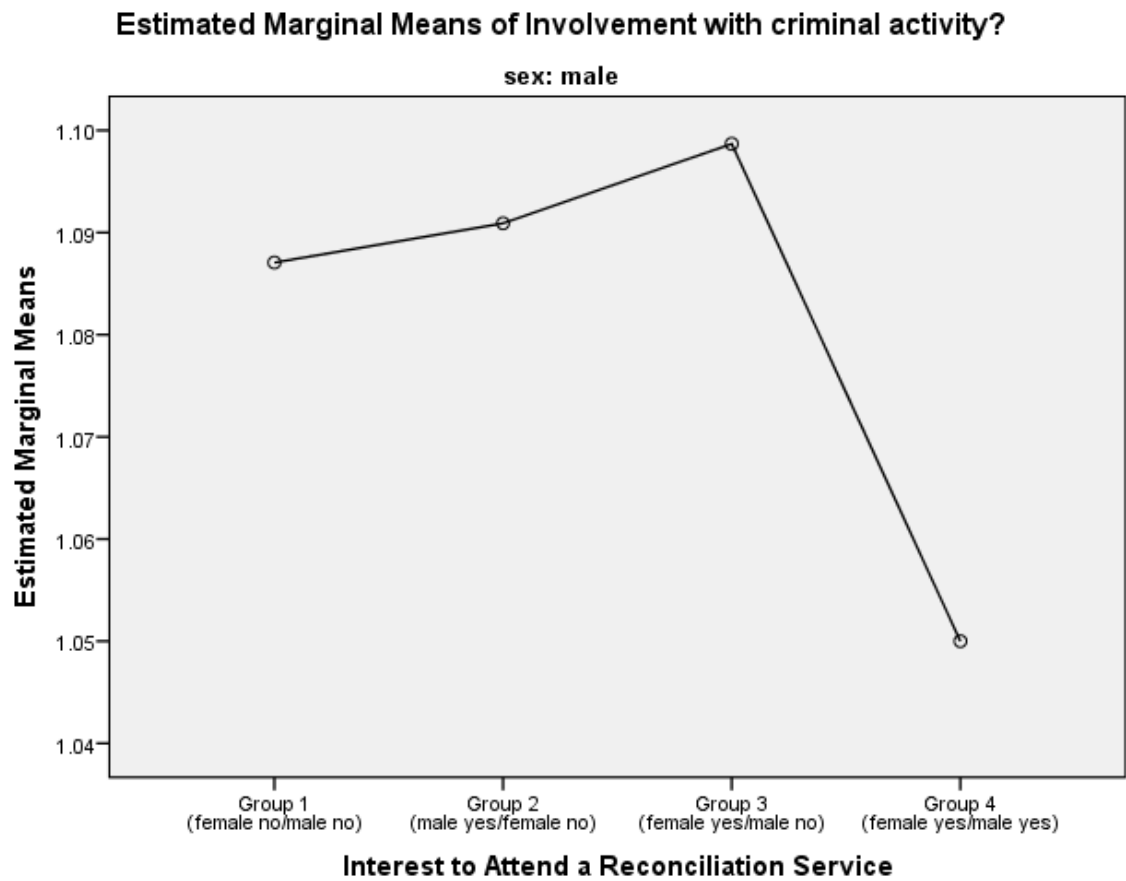


Figure 26: Chi-square reconciliation belief from time 1 to time 2

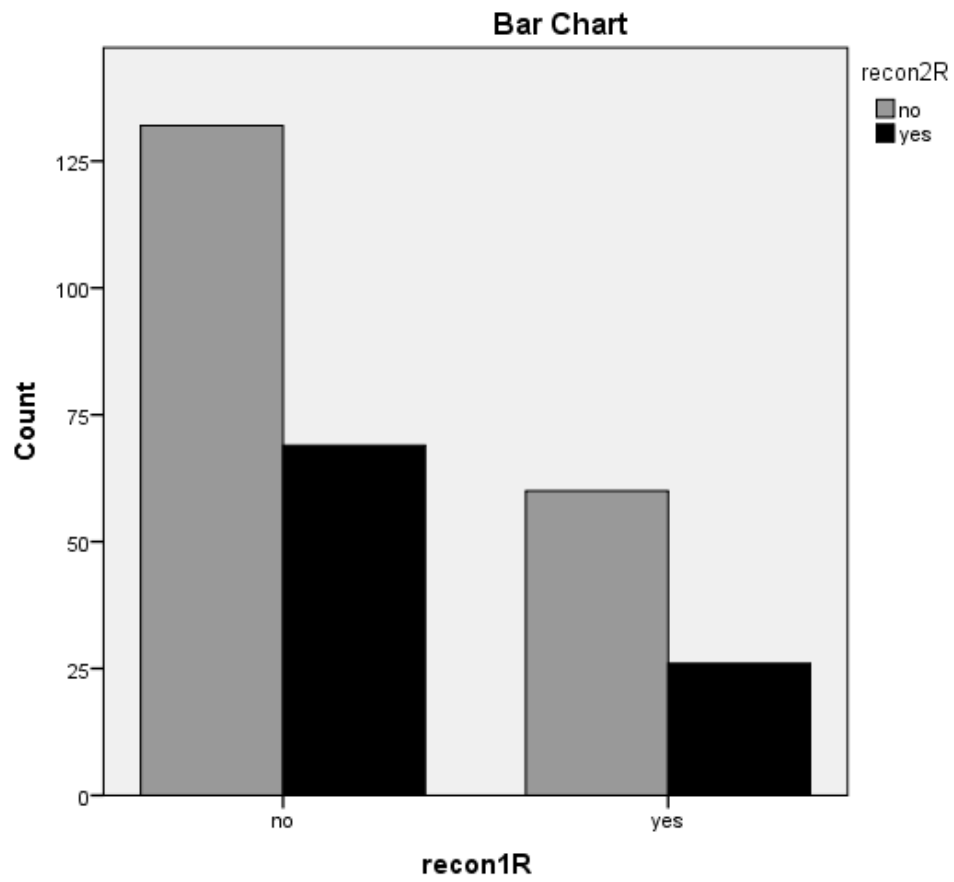


Figure 27: Chi-square reconciliation service from time 1 to time 2

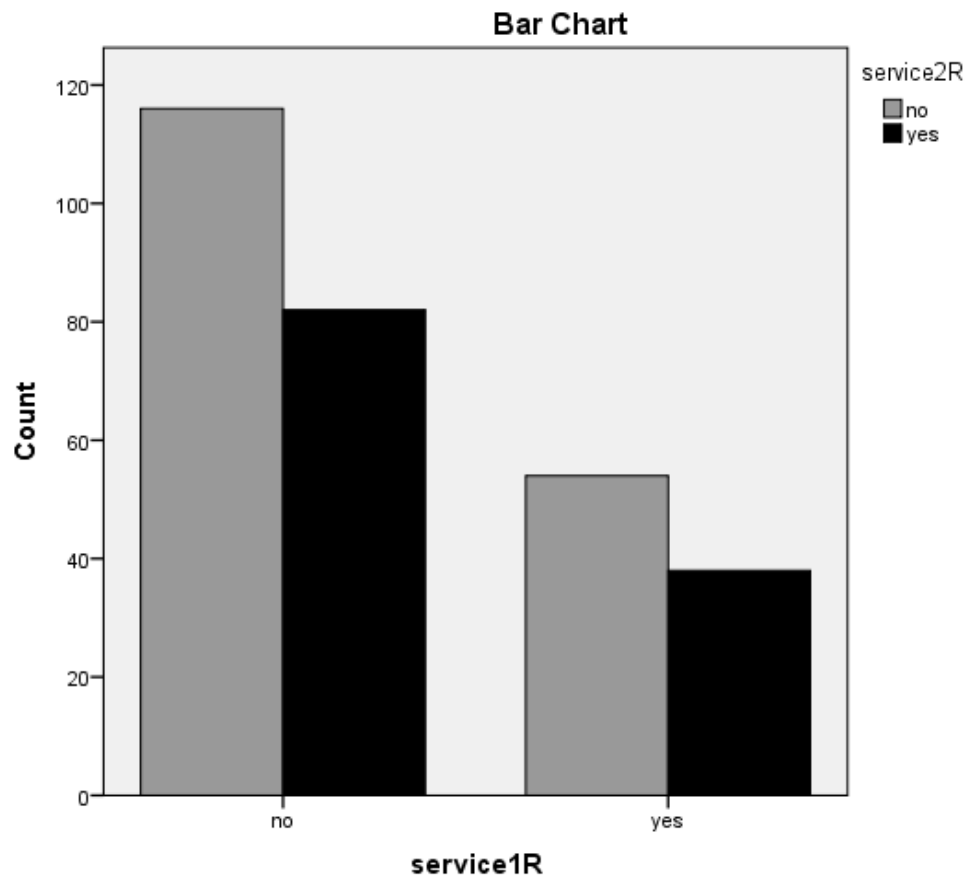


Figure 28: Chi-square reconciliation belief from time 1 to time 3

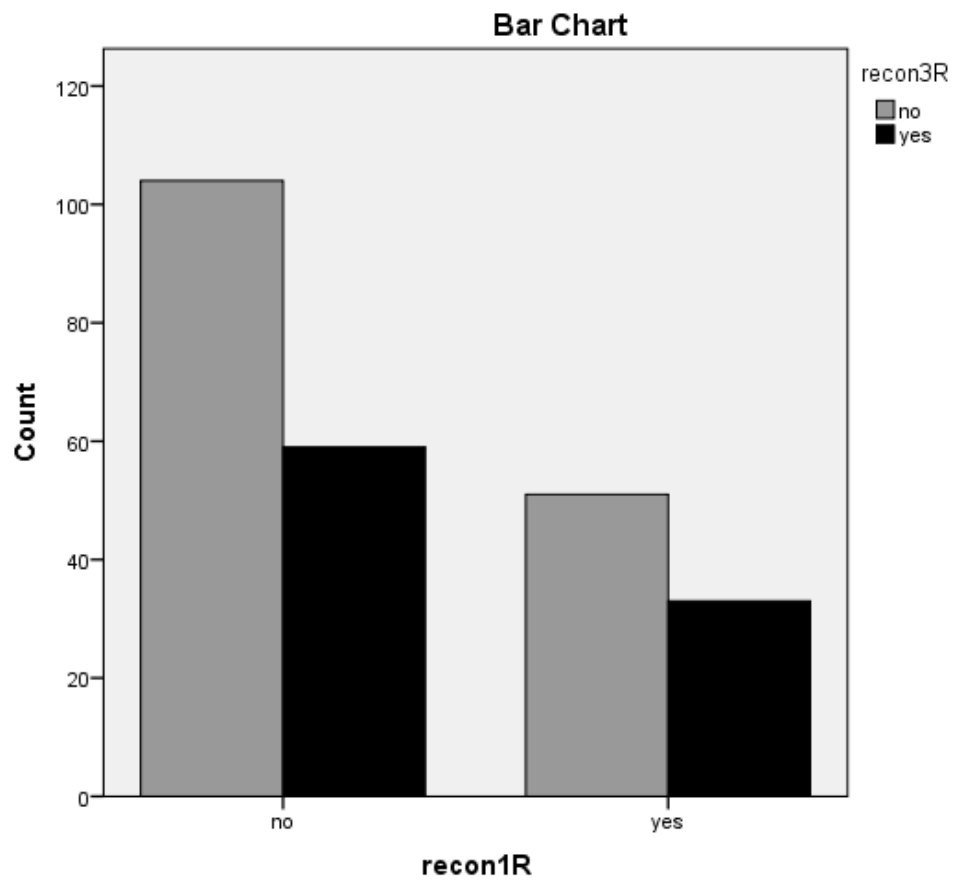


Figure 29: Chi-square reconciliation service from time 1 to time 3

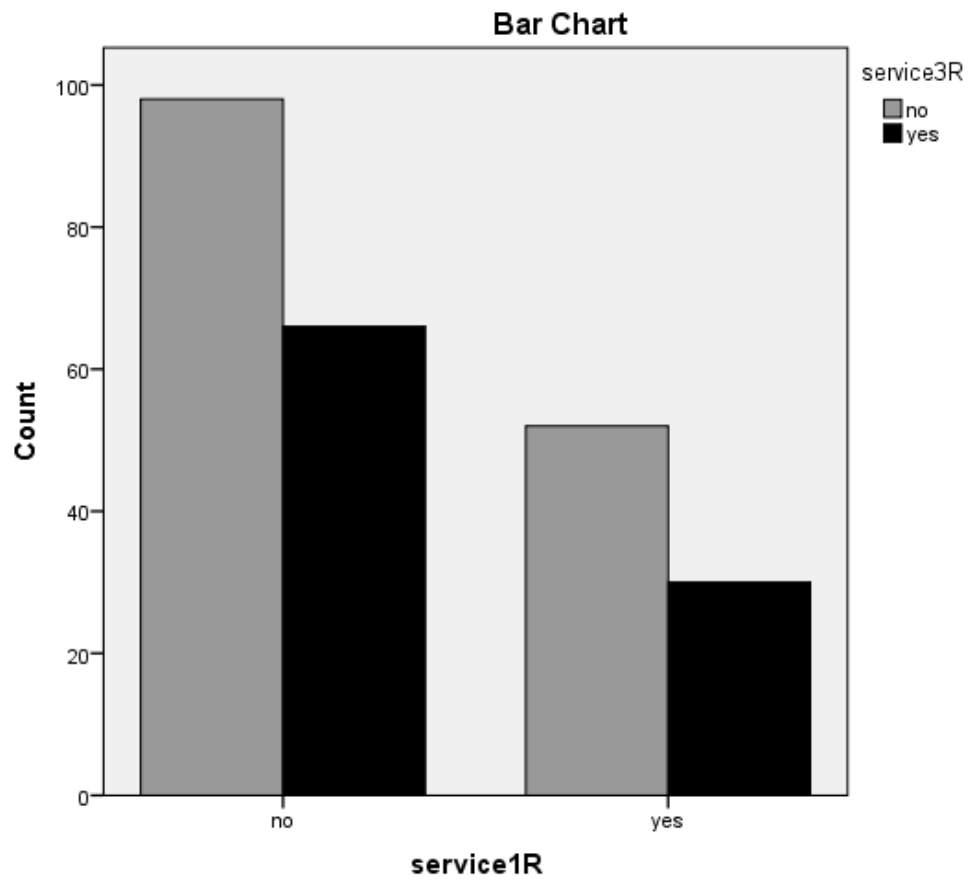


Figure 30: Chi-square reconciliation belief from time 2 to time 3

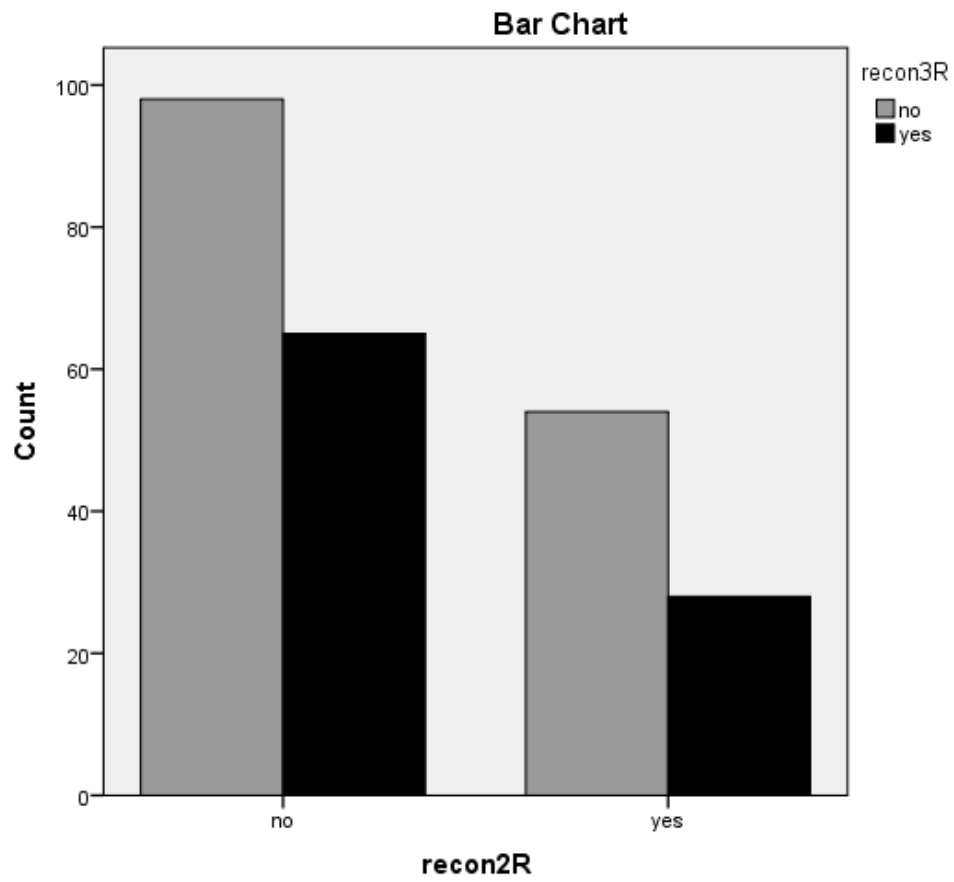


Figure 31: Chi-square reconciliation service from time 2 to time 3

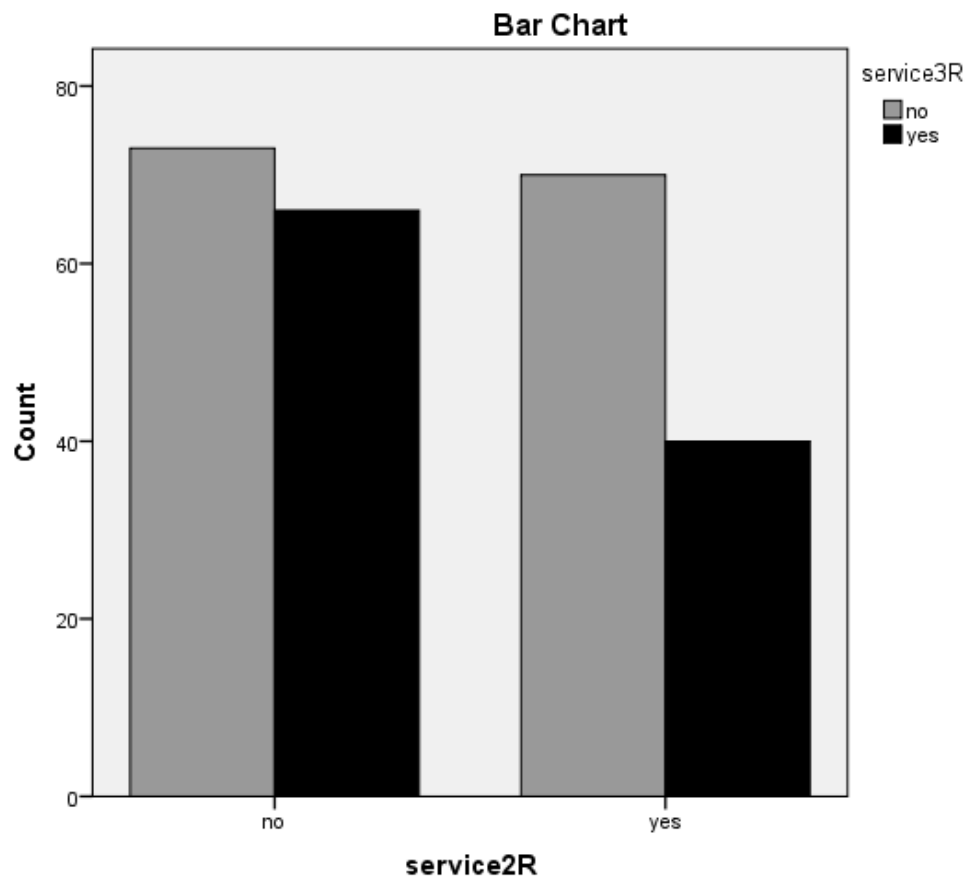


Figure 32: Piecewise regression reconciliation belief model 1

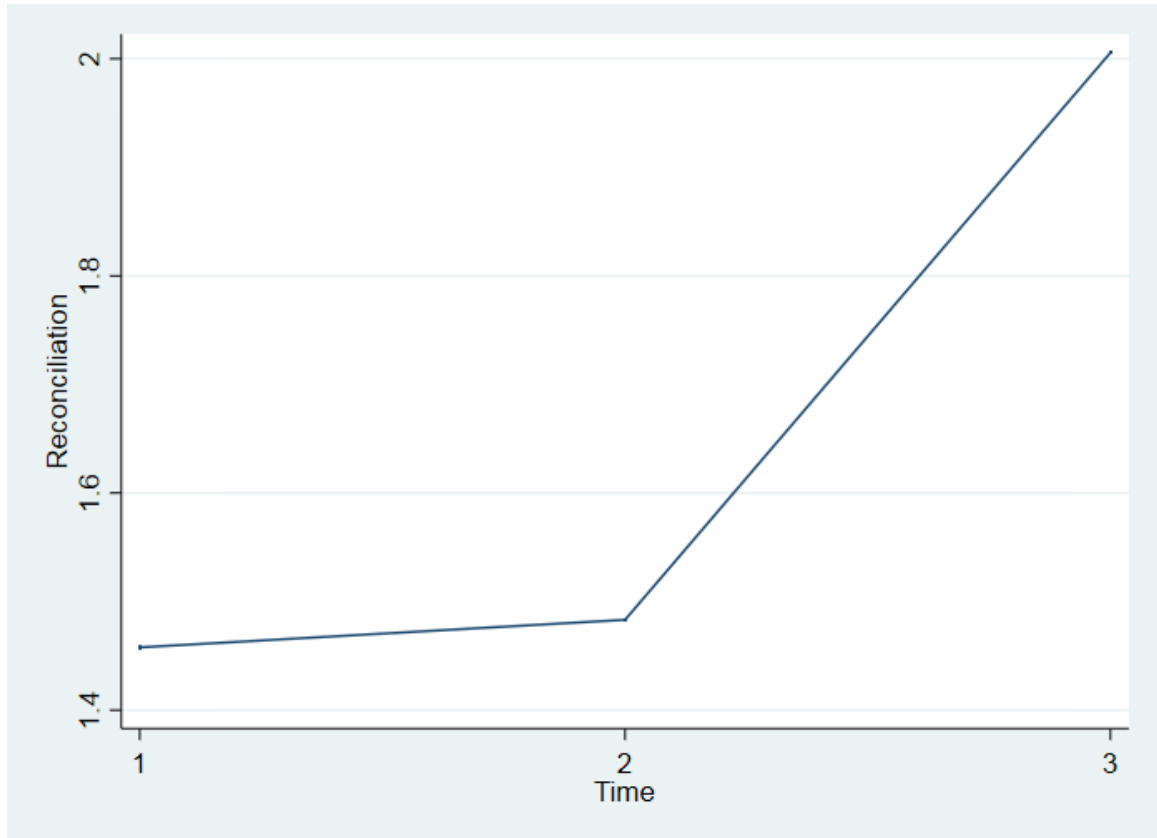


Figure 33: Piecewise regression reconciliation belief model 2

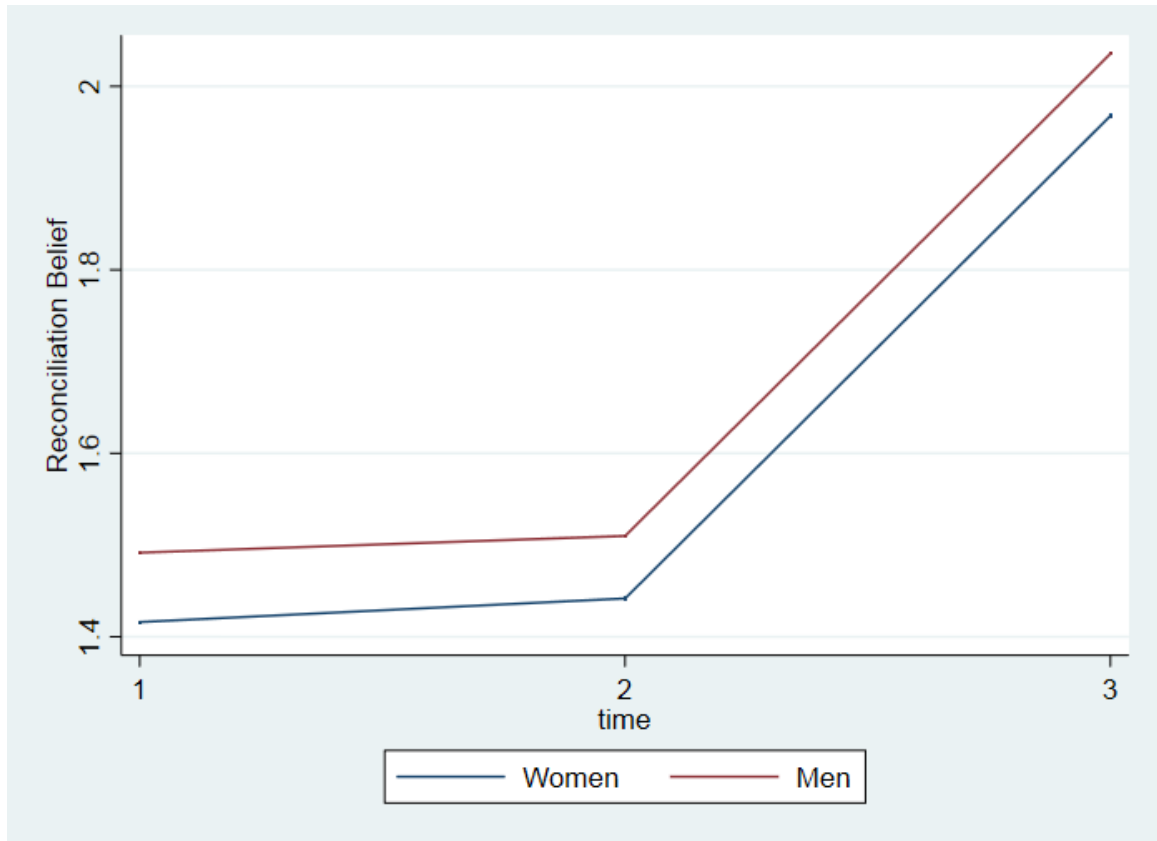


Figure 34: Piecewise regression reconciliation belief model 3

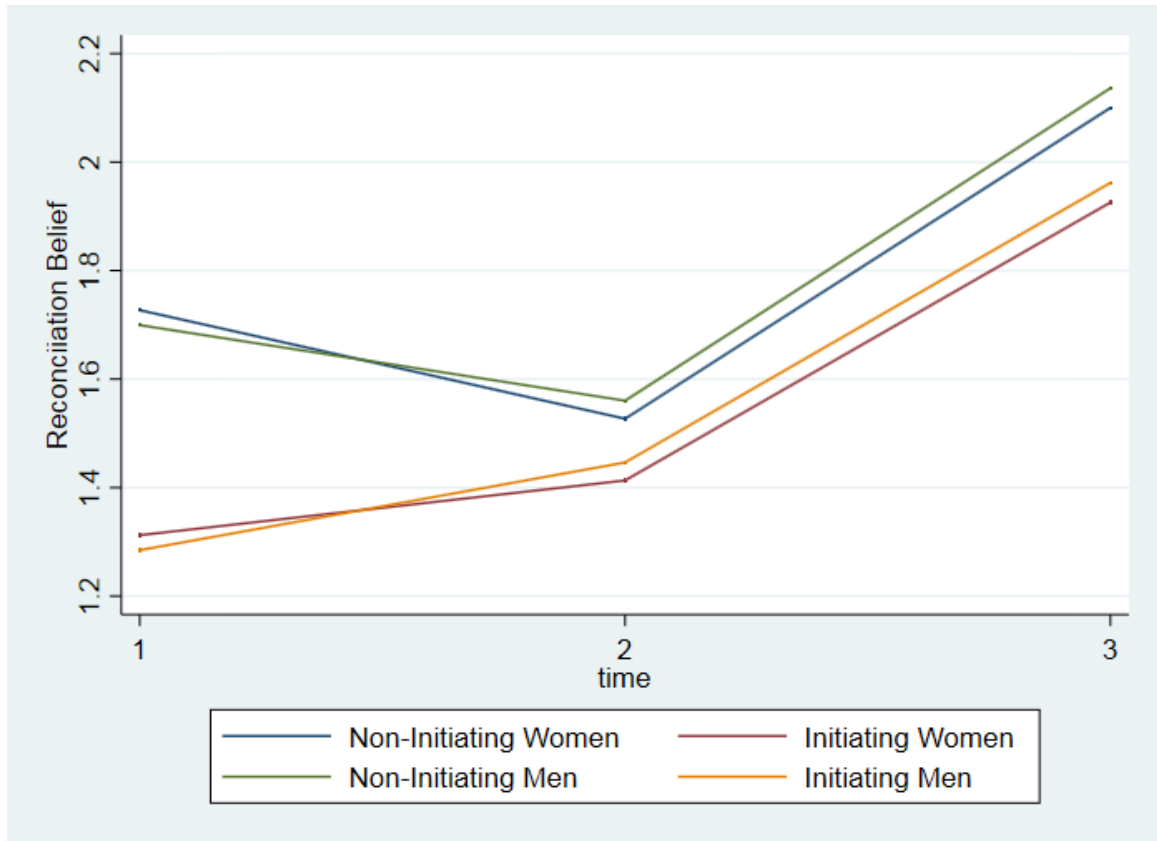


Figure 35: Piecewise regression reconciliation service model 1

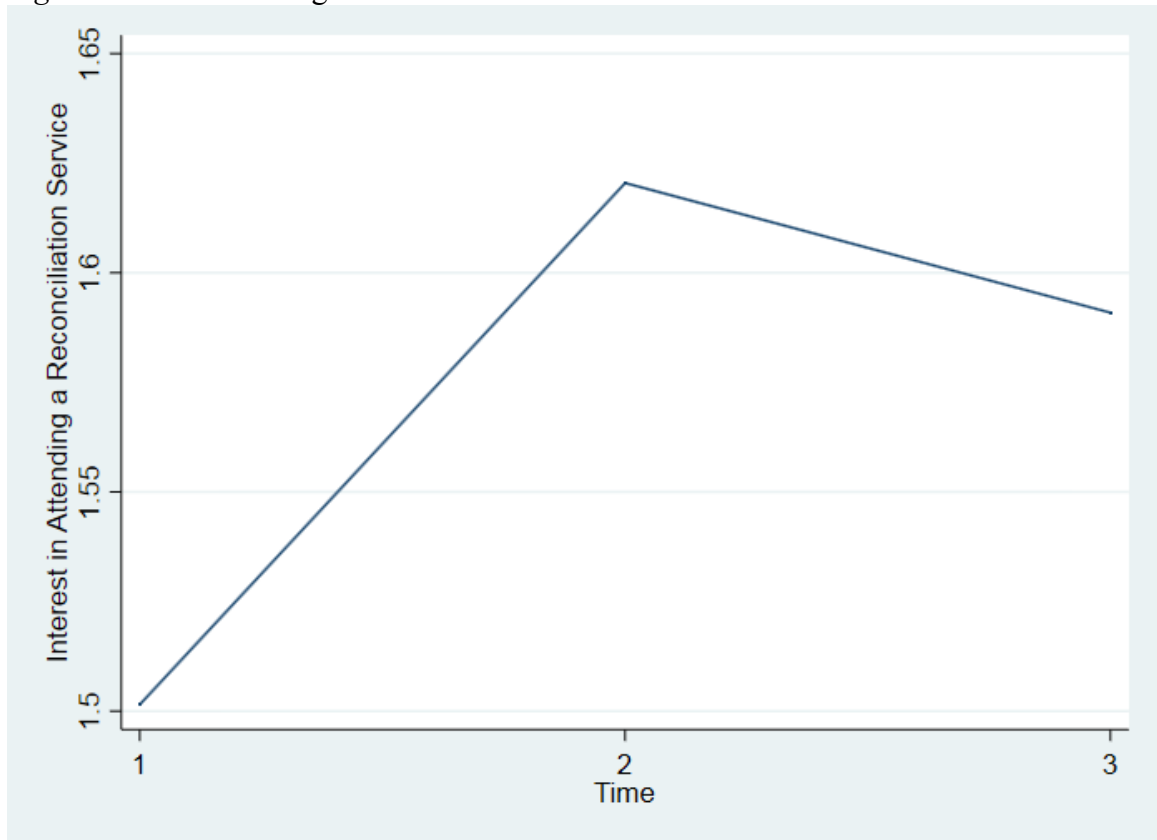


Figure 36: Piecewise regression reconciliation service model 2

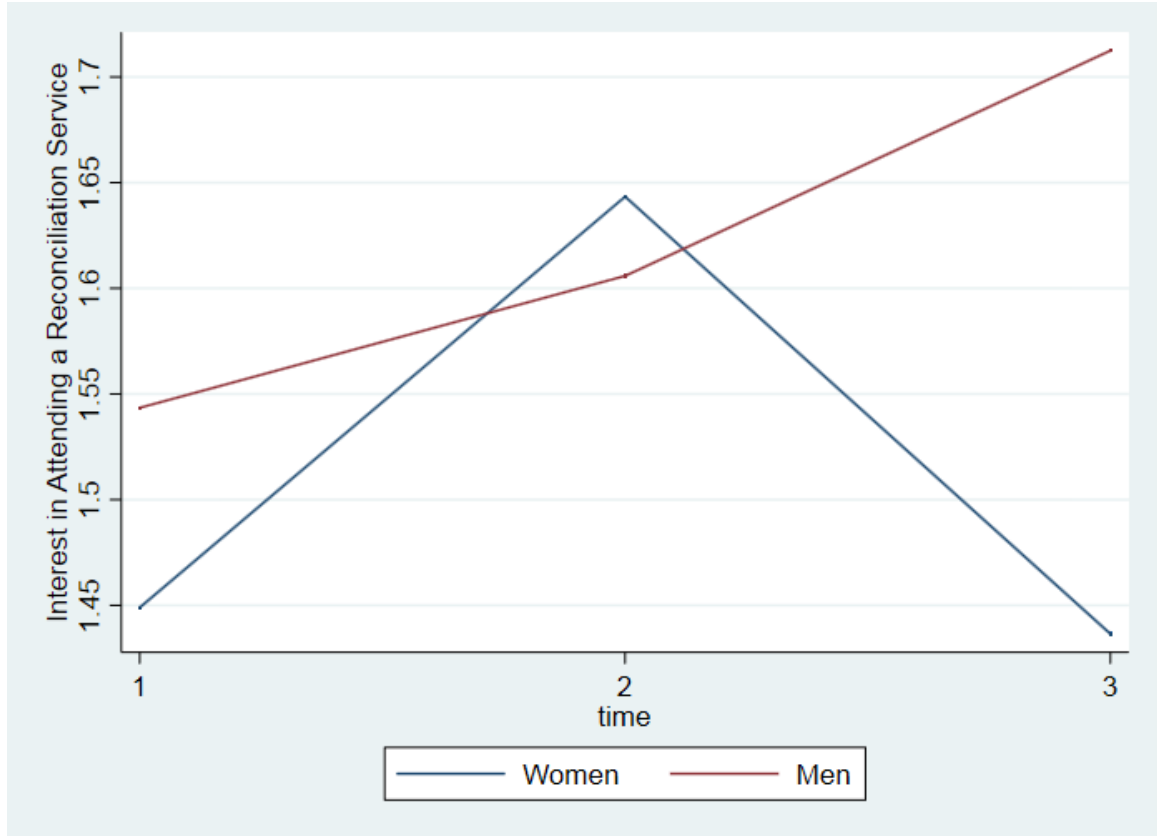
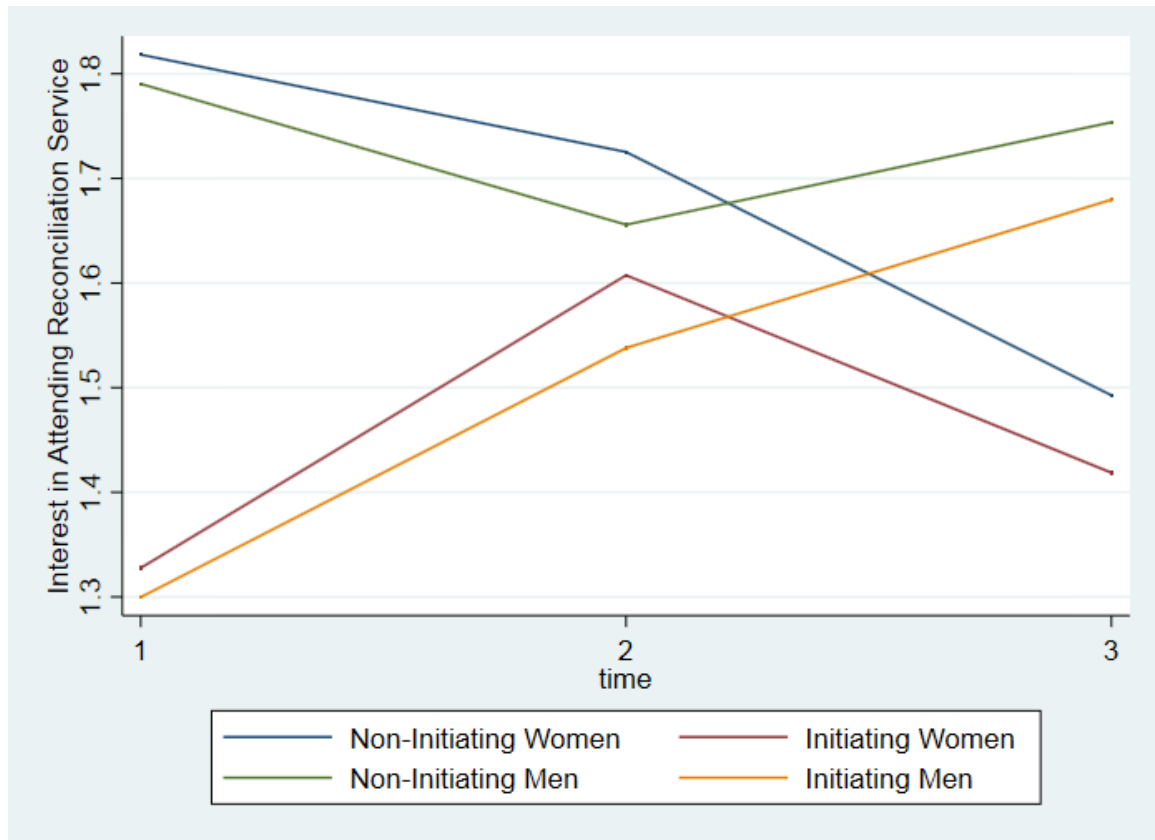


Figure 37: Piecewise regression reconciliation service model 3



VITA

Todd Spencer

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation : THE INFLEUNCE OF DIVORCE FACTORS ON DIVORCING
COUPLES' RECONCILATION BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD
ATTENDING RECONCILIATION SERVICES

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Therapy at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 2015.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Family Studies at
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Teaching Associate, Oklahoma State University, 2015 – present

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National Council on Family Relations
Society for Research in Human Development
Association of Family and Conciliation Courts